

The Jane Austen Society



Report for 2008

The Jane Austen Society

Founded in 1940 by Miss Dorothy Darnell
Registered Charity No. 1040613
www.janeaustensociety.org.uk

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Cheques should be sent to the Membership Secretary at the address above. Members resident abroad are asked to pay subscriptions in sterling by means of a banker's draft. Please add sterling £5 to foreign currency cheques.

Copies of the Constitution of the Society may be obtained from the website, or by application to the Secretary.

Front cover: Henry Curzon Allport (1788-1854), Lichfield Cathedral, 1813 (watercolour on paper). Reproduced by kind permission of the Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts, State Library of Tasmania.

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From the Chairman

During the past year the Society held a weekend conference in Lichfield under the title of 'Jane Austen and Dr Johnson', the purpose of which was to focus on the life of Johnson, who was so much admired by Jane. A highlight of the conference was the visit to Hamstall Ridware, and the Church of St Michael and All Angels where the Revd Edward Cooper, Jane Austen's cousin, was the incumbent for over 30 years until his death in 1833. A talk from the pulpit by Irene Collins helped the audience (or congregation) to a detailed understanding of the Evangelical movement, of which Edward Cooper was a leading proponent. Later we were privileged to attend Choral Evensong in the beautiful Lichfield Cathedral.

This year is an important one in the history of the Jane Austen Society. We are celebrating the 200th anniversary of the arrival to live in Chawton of Jane Austen and her mother and sister in July 1809. In the build-up to this date an extensive development programme, mainly funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, has been under way at Jane Austen's House Museum, scheduled for completion by the end of June.

Every five years the Society elects its Committee, and 2009 is the election year. Many of the current members will continue to serve on the new Committee. There will be a new Chairman and Treasurer, in the persons of David Selwyn and Bruce Johnstone respectively; Maureen Stiller will continue to serve as Hon. Secretary, and Elizabeth Proudman will become Vice-Chairman. It has been a pleasure and privilege for me to serve as Chairman for the past five years, and I plan to continue to be the person that ensures that you have somewhere to sit at the AGM.

Patrick Stokes

[It is intended that in future, lectures given at the Society's conferences should be published in the Annual Report. Papers from the Lichfield Conference will be found on pages 000-000.—Ed.]

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

held on Saturday 19 July 2008

at Chawton House, Hampshire

(by courtesy of Chawton House Library)

1. **The President**, Richard Knight, welcomed members to the meeting.

2. **Minutes** of the AGM 2007 were approved by the meeting.

3. Officers' Reports

The Chairman, Patrick Stokes, on behalf of the Trustees of the Society, had pleasure in presenting his Report for the period since the AGM in 2007 until the

current date, to give the members an update on the activities within the Society. He asked those Trustees present to stand up and identify themselves to the membership and thanked them for their devoted and tireless work. He thanked everyone who had made the effort to attend the AGM and, in particular, those who had come from overseas, including a party of 39 JASNA members who would be attending the afternoon session.

He then gave apologies from the Society's printers for the slightly delayed arrival of the 2007 Annual Report and for the omission of some of the Society's Vice-Presidents. He noted, however, that Elizabeth Jenkins had been included, and who would be 103 in October 2008.

It was with great sadness and regret that he announced the death, in October 2008, of Patricia Clarke, a pillar of the London Group. Patricia's sparkling and radiant presence was sadly missed by the many who knew her. Her contribution to Jane Austen activities was much appreciated and admired. Also, during the last year, Doreen Wright and Jean Dawson, both stalwarts of the Kent Branch of the Society, passed away. Jean had been a star alumna of Somerville College, Oxford. Another keen Society member who had passed away recently was Yvonne Maurer, who had bequeathed her impressive collection of books to the Society. The Society's sympathy and heartfelt condolences were also extended to Anne Channon, who was well known to members as one of the key people managing the Jane Austen's House Museum, and whose son Simon died suddenly in a motoring accident in October 2007, leaving his young family bereft.

Two years ago by courtesy of the Trustees of Chawton House Library, the House had been opened for AGM attendees to visit during the day. It had not been possible for it to be opened for the 2007 AGM, but Steve Laurence, the recently appointed Director of Chawton House Library, had promised that the House would be open on the day of the 2008 AGM, as this would be the 200th anniversary of the arrival of the Austen ladies in Chawton. However, members would be very welcome at the House on its other Open Days on Thursday 31 July and Thursday 21 August, with an entrance fee of £6 for adults, and children free. Additionally, on Saturday 13 September the House would be open under the Heritage Scheme, when entrance would be free.

The Society's Committee had met three times during the last year, in line with past practice, with all meetings taking place in the Granary at Jane Austen's House Museum. However, this would not be possible for some meetings in 2009 because of developments which would be referred to later in the report. There had been no changes in the Committee in the past year. The Chairman pointed out that the Society Committee was elected for a five year period and, having just completed four years, would be going through the election process during the next 12 months. He asked members who were interested in serving on the Committee, to complete the paperwork which would be included with the *News Letter*.

He thanked Committee members for their work during the year: Dr Brian Joice, who managed the Society's website, for his major contribution in making it a superb showpiece, keeping both members and non-members abreast of events around the Society; David Selwyn, as the Society's Vice-Chairman and editor of Society publications, for his wonderful work in editing both the *News Letter* and

the *Annual Report*; Maureen Stiller, for her continuing able work as Honorary Secretary of the Society; Jill Williams, as Honorary Treasurer, for her continuing patient work in getting to grips with the challenging and changing complexity of Charities' legislation; Fiona Ainsworth for her excellent job as Branches Secretary; and Lesley Wilson for her excellent work of managing the publishing and printing of Society publications, particularly in the important move towards modern distribution and sale processes. Lastly, he thanked the Society's President, Richard Knight, who continued to oversee the Committee's efforts in his uniquely positive, helpful and supportive style. The Society was also grateful to him for his family's connection with Chawton House and the Library Trustees, which had made it possible to continue to hold the Annual General Meeting in the House's beautiful grounds. The AGM had been held there for the last fifty-three years. He then thanked the Membership Secretary, Rosemary Culley, who once again during the year had continued to do sterling work for the Society.

If members had had time to analyse the Society's accounts, published in the Annual Report, they would have noticed that the Society's expenditure was more than its income from its principal activities – running the AGM and publishing books, two *News Letters* each year and the *Annual Report*. The Committee had, therefore, decided to raise the annual subscription, with effect from 1 January 2009, to £20 a year for individual membership, £25 for joint membership, £300 for life membership, and £50 for corporate membership.

The Society continued to support the educational programme managed by Louise West and supported by Anne Channon, at Jane Austen's House Museum, which was directed at both primary and secondary schools for upwards of 40 visits a year. School users of the joint House Museum and Chawton House Library service continued to increase, particularly for GCSE and sixth form groups, and several groups of French and Italian teenagers, studying Jane Austen at school, had also visited the Cottage in large numbers. The success of such programmes and the ever-increasing number of visitors, currently standing at 30,000 a year, constituted the background to the Memorial Trust's development programme to provide better facilities for current and future visitors, and which was about to begin.

The proposals provided for the retail and entry facilities to be moved to the Granary; the installation of a research library in the subsequently vacated bookshop; restoration of the Austens' kitchen; and the construction of a new building behind, and in the style of, the bake-house, for a new learning centre. The other seven rooms of the main house would be just for museum display with the overriding imperative that the 'lived-in home' feeling, and the historic structure, of the House was retained. The Memorial Trust had worked with a Museum Design consultancy and Hampshire County Council Architects' department, and had had consultations with English Heritage, the East Hants Conservation Service, Chawton Parish Council, and the Society's committee, among others. Full Listed Building and Planning Consent had been granted in April 2008, and the whole cost of £670,000 for the scheme had been covered by a £130,000 grant from the Trust itself and the private executors' trust of the late Penelope Dore, and £540,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Museum would be open for as long as was

required during the AGM day, and Tom Carpenter would be on hand with plans and a scale model on show to answer members' other questions. The scheme was expected to be completed in time for the opening on that 200th anniversary of 7 July 1809 when Mrs Austen, her daughters and Martha Lloyd moved in. Finally, the Chairman wished to put on record the huge debt of gratitude owed to Tom Carpenter for years of effort leading to the successful implementation of the project.

In September 2007, the Society organised a conference entitled 'Jane Austen, Early Years in Hampshire' which was held in Basingstoke. Opportunity was taken to visit the classical Jane Austen sites, in particular her birthplace at Steventon, where the parish laid on an excellent reception; a visit to Ashe House – the then home of Mrs Lefroy; a luncheon at Bramley; and a visit to the Vyne. In respect of Steventon, archaeological excavations were taking place, albeit very slowly, on the site of Steventon rectory, where the basic outline of the house had already been identified. A conference entitled 'Jane Austen and Dr Johnson' would be held in September 2008, at Lichfield, Staffordshire. Highlights of the programme would include a visit to the Revd Edward Cooper's parish at Hamstall Ridware, attendance at choral evensong at Lichfield Cathedral, and a lecture, 'Jane Austen and Dr Johnson', by Professor David Nokes, the noted biographer of Jane Austen, and next year as biographer of Dr Johnson in celebration of the tercentenary of Johnson's birth in 1709.

In November 2007, a successful and well attended one-day conference was held under Professor Janet Todd's chairmanship in conjunction with London University, with the heading 'Jane Austen and Endings'. Speakers included Elizabeth Eger of King's College, London, Ashley Tauchert of Exeter University, Emma Clery of Southampton University, and David Selwyn. A further one-day conference at Senate House under Professor Janet Todd's Chairmanship was planned for Saturday 22 November 2008. The programme and application details were available to members at the marquee entrance.

The Branches and Groups had continued to prosper, and the annual meeting between their representatives and the main Committee was successfully held in March.

The Society was publishing the sixth volume of the *Collected Reports* covering the period 2001 to 2005 on the day of the AGM and it was available for purchase at the Jane Austen Society table. Vera Quin, of the London Group, had published her own booklet entitled *Jane Austen Visits London*, which was similarly on sale. In the near future, the Society would be reprinting *My Aunt Jane Austen* by Caroline Austen.

The Friends of Chawton Church were raising funds to have new bells in the Church in time for the bicentenary in 2009 of the arrival of the Austen ladies at Chawton. The two bells that Jane Austen would have heard would be available for ringing in the Church, together with six new bells, one of which would be dedicated to Jane Austen. Financial support had already been given by JASNA, the Jane Austen Society of Australia, and UK Society members, but anyone wishing to support this effort further could do so by purchasing a *Chawton Calendar* at the Society table or making a donation there. The two oldest bells had been cast

in 1448 and 1621, but in 1748 the rector, John Hinton, felt it necessary to apply to the Bishop of Winchester to sell the bells to pay for church fabric repairs. The villagers signed a petition to the Bishop to stop the sale, and the bells were consequently saved.

The President thanked the Chairman for his report and reminded the membership of all the work that Patrick tirelessly undertook on behalf of the Society: chairing the Committee meetings, sitting on sub-Committees, organising the annual conference and AGM and working as a Trustee of the Jane Austen Memorial Trust, which managed Jane Austen's House.

The Honorary Secretary, Maureen Stiller, advised that the membership figures for the year ended 30 June 2008 stood at 1767. This figure took account of the 125 members who had joined during the year, 73 who had not renewed their membership, 20 who had resigned mostly owing to age or infirmity, 26 who had died and 35 whose post had been returned. She reminded members once again, that if they had moved home or were likely to be moving home, they should add Rosemary Culley to the list of people they needed to notify of their new address. Moreover, if members were paying by bankers' order or similar, they should ask their bank to include their membership number in the payment. Banks tended to shorten names, which made it difficult to identify who the payer was, whereas they did not shorten numbers. Rosemary also needed to be advised if members changed their Bank.

David Selwyn had asked to bring to members' notice the new volume of *Collected Reports*, with an index for the five *Annual Reports* that were included within it. The normal retail cost would be £23, but it was available at the AGM at the special rate of £16.50 and could be purchased at the Society's publications table. There was also a special offer of that volume together with the previous volume 5 (which included the cumulative Index) for £30 the pair. On the P & G Wells bookstall, in the afternoon, both David Selwyn and Deirdre Le Faye would be signing copies of their own books. Vera Quin, of the London Group, would also be signing her new book, *Jane Austen Visits London*.

The latest report on finding the foundations of Jane Austen's first home at Steventon was that there was to be a final detailed survey of the field during Autumn 2008. This was to be carried out by the archaeologist with help from Reading University and members of the Basingstoke Historical and Archaeological Society. The results of the earlier surveys had been very promising, with the finding of definite, albeit not contiguous, outlines of a building. Once the archaeologist had pulled together all the information and published her report, the Society would then decide on how it should proceed in making this information available to members and to the general public, and in what format.

The Honorary Treasurer, Jill Williams, reminded members that the Accounts were now in the format required by the Charity Commissioners, with a preliminary page stating the aims and objectives of the Society, and an independent examiner's report.

As had been stated earlier by the Chairman, the Accounts now showed that expenditure from Society activities exceeded income, owing mainly to increasing costs of publications, paper costs and postage. Although the finances were

generally in good shape, the Society had to ensure that its annual income was sufficient to offset its running costs, and it was necessary to increase annual subscriptions. Members were reminded that membership figures and finances in the Accounts were for the calendar year January to December as opposed to the up-to-date ones notified by the Hon. Secretary, or the financial year defined by the Inland Revenue. She reminded married couples renewing their subscription to ensure that it was the same person who completed the Gift Aid form, their subscription to the Society, and the cheque. Otherwise this presented difficulty in claiming Gift Aid from the Inland Revenue.

Finally, she thanked the Branch Treasurers for all their hard work during the year.

4. Date of Next Meeting Saturday 18 July 2009.

Jean Freeman



Jean Freeman hosting family at tea time, 2 April 2002

Jean Freeman, who died aged 88 in Bath on 18 October 2008, was a much loved and respected member of the Jane Austen Society. Jean joined the Society in 1952 and had attended, often accompanied by members of her family, every Annual General Meeting of the Society since 1958. Before being confined to her wheelchair, she was always present early on the day of the meeting offering her help to do whatever jobs were required.

Encouraged by Sir Hugh Smiley, the Chairman of the Jane Austen Society at that time, Jean wrote *Jane Austen in Bath*, first published in 1969. This booklet,

with its delightful evocation of Bath and Jane Austen's life there around 1800, is the Jane Austen Society's best selling publication. It has been several times reprinted and was revised and updated in 2002.

Having trained as a nurse at St Thomas's Hospital, Jean married Lieutenant John Freeman, Royal Navy, in Tewkesbury Abbey in February 1943. Three sons were born to them and Jean's family was always the centre and most important part of her life. Much of Jean's life since 1951 was spent in Bath, with interludes in London, Windsor and Brighton, and in recent years she regularly attended at meetings of her local Jane Austen Bath and Bristol Group.

Jean not only loved all Jane Austen's novels but was greatly influenced and inspired in her own life by what she perceived to be Jane Austen's values, such as family loyalty and an abiding interest in all the pursuits and activities of the younger generations of her large family. Jean liked people, and her charming personality, innate kindness and genuine interest in those she met made a deep impression on all with whom she came into contact.

In addition to her admiration for Jane Austen, Jean was a member of the Byron Society of which she was at one time the Hon. Secretary and later a Vice-President. She was also a member of the Fanny Burney Society and she developed a lively interest in Germany and its culture, with a wide circle of friends there whom she visited frequently, acquiring proficient German in the process.

Jean is survived by her husband, her three sons George, Peter and James and by many grandchildren and great grandchildren. Her granddaughter Catharine Freeman has been a member of the Committee of the Jane Austen Society.

Gavin Turner



Jean Freeman, pictured here when she was guest of honour at the Jane Austen Society Conference Dinner in Bath, September 2002, talking to then Society Chairman, Brian Southam

Branches and Groups

KENT

The year began with our AGM on 15 March, held in the elegant dining room of Goodnestone Park. After lunch, and an opportunity to take a stroll in the gardens on a fine spring day, we settled down to an interesting talk given by Vivien Jones, Professor of Eighteenth-Century Gender and Culture at Leeds University, on 'Jane Austen's Nieces'. Professor Jones compared the two cousins, Anna Austen, daughter of James, and Fanny Knight, daughter of Edward, noting that Anna sought advice on writing and Fanny on affairs of love.

On 7 June we held a Study Day as our annual Summer Event at Godmersham. Unusually, the weather was unseasonably chilly, so the usual picnics and explorations in the Park had to be replaced by lunches taken in the Orangerie. The title of the day was 'Life in a Country House'. In the morning we looked at gardens, guided by Professor Malcolm Andrews's talk on 'Jane Austen and the Vogue for the Picturesque'. The picturesque became a cult, and also a marker of status, taste, fashion and education; typically, Jane ridiculed it, and preferred a middle way. In the afternoon we heard from Professor Claire Lamont, who was delighted to be able to give her talk, 'Living in Jane Austen's Houses', in the beautiful entrance hall which Jane would have known well from her seven visits. Her subject was not the houses, but how they were lived in. Communal living took place in public rooms, and there was little privacy; proposals often took place out of doors. After each lecture the audience divided into four discussion groups, which then returned for a question and answer session with the speaker.

On 18 July several members attended the opening of the Godmersham Heritage Centre, set up by John and Fiona Sunley, our President, in a building adjacent to Godmersham Church. This is intended for small exhibitions of local historical interest, and the first one was a commemoration of the life of Jane's sister-in-law Elizabeth Austen (1773-1808) It was opened by the Lord Lieutenant of Kent, Allan Willetts, who thought that Jane might have found 'these pleasing attentions' flattering.

The Annual Lunch was again held at Broome Park on 22 November, when 32 members enjoyed a delicious lunch and a talk given by Claire Harman, 'Jane's Fame: How It Conquered the World'. Despite initial difficulties in finding a publisher, Jane's fame grew after the early success of *Pride and Prejudice*; Sheridan thought it the cleverest thing he had ever read. Other writers did not agree, including Wordsworth and Emily Brontë. Interest waned in the mid-nineteenth century, and was rekindled by James Edward Austen-Leigh's 1870 biography, which set up the cult of Jane's sweetness and gentility. Claire Harman considers her more of a writer for our times than for her own.

The annual edition of *Austentions* appeared in April, ably edited by our Chairman, Averil Clayton; 64 pages were filled by 11 articles, several contributed by members. Two contributions arrived almost simultaneously on the same topic of servants: one by Bridget Duckenfield, 'Jane Austen Behind the Green Baize'

and the other by Katherine Skillen, 'Jane Austen and Servants'. Wisely, Averil decided to print them both.

Other pleasures in the year included a lecture given at Godmersham Church by Kate Drayton from the University of East Anglia on 'Extraordinary Minds in Jane Austen's Worlds', a fascinating exploration of the mind under pressure, with special reference to *Persuasion*. Our lively Discussion Group, led by Bridget Duckenfield, met twice: in the spring, at Angela Bates's cottage in Pluckley, to discuss 'Travel in Jane Austen's Life and Novels', and in the autumn at Goodnestone, by kind invitation of our patron Margaret Lady FitzWalter, to discuss A Favourite Comic Character. An exhibition was held at Tonbridge Parish Church on the Austen family in Tonbridge, and we are working with the church to establish a permanent exhibition there, with an audio guide and a display cabinet, funding for which has been largely provided by JASNA.

In other words, another lively, enjoyable and stimulating year in the history of the Kent Branch.

Jill Webster

LONDON

As usual our 2008 programme split evenly between considering the texts of the novels and the period. We started, at the suggestion of friends in Kent Branch, with Professor Valerie Sanders on mini biographies and went on to a close look at Jane Austen's developing view of nature by Dr John Hudson. In an earlier incarnation he had been an actor, so when he read aloud the passages really came to life. At the AGM we stayed with landscape: Margaret Chittick and I gave an illustrated talk on Jane Austen's landscape in her day and ours (this was repeated at the JASNA conference in Chicago and was so kindly received that we were asked to contribute to the 2009 one in Philadelphia). The summer outing was a joint meeting with the Hampshire Branch: Jane Hurst led a much appreciated walk through Alton and then both contingents went to Stratfield Saye. There, apart from the exhibition in the stables, wandering in the park and a tour of the house, we were shown the first editions of the novels, collected by the 7th Duke, one of the earliest and most enthusiastic supporters of the JAS.

In October we had the inaugural Patricia Clarke Memorial Lecture (the plan is to make this an annual event and the highlight of our programme). The speaker was Professor Michael Wheeler on 'Jane Austen and the glories of Winchester Cathedral'. This combined Jane Austen's life, death, her family and friends with the architecture and history of the cathedral, and a look forward to Keats who, only a few years after Jane Austen's death, visited the city and wrote of it sympathetically. The Birthday Lunch, a most enjoyable occasion, was entertained with a re-enactment, by Margaret Chittick and Katharine Chasey, of the scene between Lady Catherine de Bourgh and Elizabeth Bennet. Our newsletter ran a questionnaire about screen adaptations; the replies split predictably between those who could not abide them and others who enjoyed and criticised them with verve and sophistication. The surprise suggestion from a number of respondents

was: ‘Why no screen version of *Sanditon*?’ Given its almost Dickensian flavour, this sounds like a genuinely promising idea. Anybody like to write to Andrew Davies?

Vera Quin

MIDLANDS

As I begin this review of 2008, the snow is just beginning to fall yet again and I am put in mind of the hazardous snowy journey undertaken by the Woodhouse family in *Emma*. Fortunately none of our activities was curtailed by the weather, despite a rather damp day for the Strawberry Tea.

Our AGM and Spring Study Day were later than normal and we were unable to have our usual room. The Dorothy Hodgkin Building proved difficult to find, not only by the delegates, but by the tea and coffee as well, or so it seemed. Notwithstanding these minor hiccoughs we did have a very good day examining new aspects of ‘Jane Austen’s World of Work and Leisure’. Sharon Ruston gave us an insight into the ‘Romantic Science and Technology’ of the day, in contrast to Ruth Watts’s approach to what the children of the day were interested in – ‘Writing for children in the late 18th and early 19th centuries’. We ended the day with ‘Music in the Georgian Era’, led by Richard Baines.

On a wet 6 July we visited Attingham Park for our Strawberry Tea. Despite the weather our guide kept us focussed with titillating stories of the ‘goings on’ within the family. Attingham is undergoing a lengthy and careful restoration at present and that process in itself was interesting. The tea, especially the cakes, was excellent and we all departed in high spirits.

The Committee and some members were very disappointed by the cancellation of the Autumn Study Day at Pendrell Hall. The numbers that registered just didn’t justify our going ahead with this project. We had booked some excellent speakers and Pendrell is well known for its cuisine and we really felt the price was right. The change of venue should have helped those who find our events are often too far away. However it may well have been just one of those things. Of course some expenses were incurred. The Committee have discussed this at length and in future we will fix upon the number we need for a successful event and not confirm our bookings until we meet the target. However we would welcome any comments or advice you have to offer.

Our Birthday Dinner, however, attracted larger numbers than recently and we had an excellent meal at The Crown, Stone, followed by music provided by young people of Staffordshire Performing Arts. The Crown is such a good venue that we plan to make this our regular choice for the next few years at least.

Jennifer Walton

NORTHERN BRANCH

As ever the Northern Branch year began with the publication in January of *Impressions* 25, followed in May and September with issues 26 and 27 respectively. As editors, we worry every time that we will be unable to fill the pages, but we should not. The articles just keep on coming and their quality and the range of topics and approaches continues to delight us, and our members. We would like to take this opportunity publicly to thank all our contributors, both regular and occasional, for continuing to support the magazine.

Our first event was held in Leeds in February. This was the splendidly named ‘Wedlock and Deadlock: The Success and Failure of Marriages in Jane Austen’. An informative and highly entertaining lecture from Luke Spencer, who offers great insights into the novels, was enhanced by accomplished readings by Luke’s wife Val. The eager questions and comments that followed, and the lively buzz of conversation over tea, left no one in doubt that the 70-strong audience was pleased with the afternoon.

In March we moved to York for a self-run discussion on Jane Austen’s Men. A large group met to consider some very interesting questions, devised by committee member Andrew Banks, on topics ranging from landowners to villains; clergy to navy; fathers and brothers; and of course, the relative merits of the heroes. Put three Jane Austen fans into a discussion and you are certain to have differences of opinion; make it a roomful and a spirited debate is bound to occur.

Back to Leeds again in May and another large audience enjoyed Charmian Knight’s ‘Homes for Heroines’. This looked at the reality of the homes Jane Austen would have had in mind when she created her grand houses, as opposed to the glamorous images seen in the dramatisations. It considered the buildings and their inhabitants and lifestyles, and the attitudes and intentions of some of the future residents (and would-be residents) of these wonderful homes. It was a lecture that demonstrated not only Charmian’s perception of literature in general and the novels in particular, but also her knowledge of the arts and history of Jane Austen’s times.

I wonder how many of the Branches and Groups managed rain-free summer outings in 2008. The Northern Branch certainly did not. But in July, with enthusiasm uncapped and spirits that refused to be dampened by the pouring rain, a large group arrived at the lovely little town of Helmsley, just north of York, to visit Duncombe Park. A welcoming coffee in the excellent tearooms got the day off to a good start, then, with the rain still pouring down, we had the unlooked for bonus of driving our cars into the courtyard to begin our splendid tours of the house, which included, for some, a friendly greeting from the owners, passing on the stairs. After a delicious and most convivial lunch the rain kindly stopped, and a hardy few ventured into the grounds, while some of the men slipped off to the nearby steam engine rally. The rest took the opportunity to visit the town with its beautiful walled garden and castle. Sunshine all the way would have been preferable, but the visit was deemed a great success.

September brought us back again to York and a presentation from firm

Northern Branch favourites, History Wardrobe, aka Lucy Adlington and Gillian Stapleton. This time we were treated to *Portrait of a Lady*, in which a young lady was prepared by her maid to sit for her portrait. As she was dressed we heard about the costume she was donning and about the whole process of portrait painting and of the lives and skills of the portrait artists of the period. These events are always humorous and entertaining, but they are never superficial. The knowledge of Lucy and Gillian is impressive; the research that has been carried out is very evident and they truly know that the best way to educate an audience is to keep them watching and listening.

The Northern Branch year ends in November with our AGM and lecture. This year we were able to return to the magnificent The King's Manor in York. This was our election year, and the entire committee was returned. Our guest speaker was Professor Valerie Sanders of the University of Hull, making a welcome return to the Branch. Her topic was intriguingly entitled 'Jane Austen's Plausible Villains', and covered a number of issues including the villains' varied objectives, their credible social skills and their impact on the other characters in the various novels. But first she began by defining the term villain. In the context of Jane Austen she saw the villains as those who aimed to satisfy their own aims and objectives, with complete disregard for the effect of their actions on others. This was a lucid, well-structured and thought-provoking talk, delivered with charm and clarity.

2008 closed with our members eagerly anticipating our plans for 2009 and the Northern Branch tenth birthday celebrations.

Marilyn Joice

SCOTTISH BRANCH

We were delighted to welcome back Professor David Bradley from the University of Abertay as our speaker for the AGM in February. Professor Bradley's topic was 'Wooden Walls to Ironclad' and he charted Francis Austen's long naval career, comparing the building of ships made of wood at the beginning of it with the move to iron at the end of it. Professor Bradley is an excellent speaker with many witty anecdotes and, much to the delight of his audience, a chance to sample some ship's biscuits, made from a recipe of the time.

In April the Scottish Branch 'went west' – to Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum in Glasgow. Nora Bartlett from the University of St Andrews led an excellent study day on *Northanger Abbey*, concluding with an extremely lively discussion between members of the audience. We were delighted that members from the Northern Branch were able to join us for this event. Kelvingrove Art Gallery has recently been refurbished and members enjoyed a guided tour, with specific reference to the Georgian period. With the sound of the Kelvingrove organ filling the air, we descended into the basement to relive *Northanger Abbey*.

The Strawberry Tea was in Edinburgh in June. We had an extremely interesting day at the John Murray archive in the National Library of Scotland, where David McClay gave us a talk and tour. Among items on display were a cheque payable

to Jane Austen for more than £38.00, a sales subscription book with details of poor sales for *Mansfield Park* and a letter from Jane Austen about slow progress in getting *Emma* published. It was felt that a return trip should be organised for another year.

Another strong contingent attended the AGM at Chawton this year, including four young members from the Glasgow University Group. Seumas and Hannah had attended previously, but it was Megan and Ruth's first visit. As usual, everyone enjoyed this annual outing to the home of Jane Austen. We love meeting members from other branches and seeing old friends. This year we met up with Diana Shervington and Gillian Dow, both of whom had given excellent talks to the Scottish Branch in previous years.

We had an extremely successful meeting in September, when we were back in Edinburgh to enjoy Penelope Byrde, author of *Jane Austen and Fashion*. Penelope's talk was on the subject of her book. We were joined by members of the Costume Society for this event, and were delighted that two of their members dressed in costume, giving a certain elegance to the day. Penelope Byrde gave an extremely interesting and detailed talk on Jane Austen and fashion, with many illustrations; she referred to the letters and, to some extent, the novels to show that Jane indeed had a healthy interest in fashion.

Finally, the Birthday Lunch at the Garvock House Hotel in Dunfermline saw so many attend that a larger room had to be found to accommodate everyone. We all enjoyed an excellent lunch from *The Jane Austen Cook Book*. David Gibson gave an extremely amusing insight into his topic 'Goodies versus Baddies' in *Mansfield Park*. A fitting end to another successful year for the Scottish Branch.

Ann Bates

Papers from the Jane Austen Society Conference, Lichfield, 2008

Jane Austen & Samuel Johnson

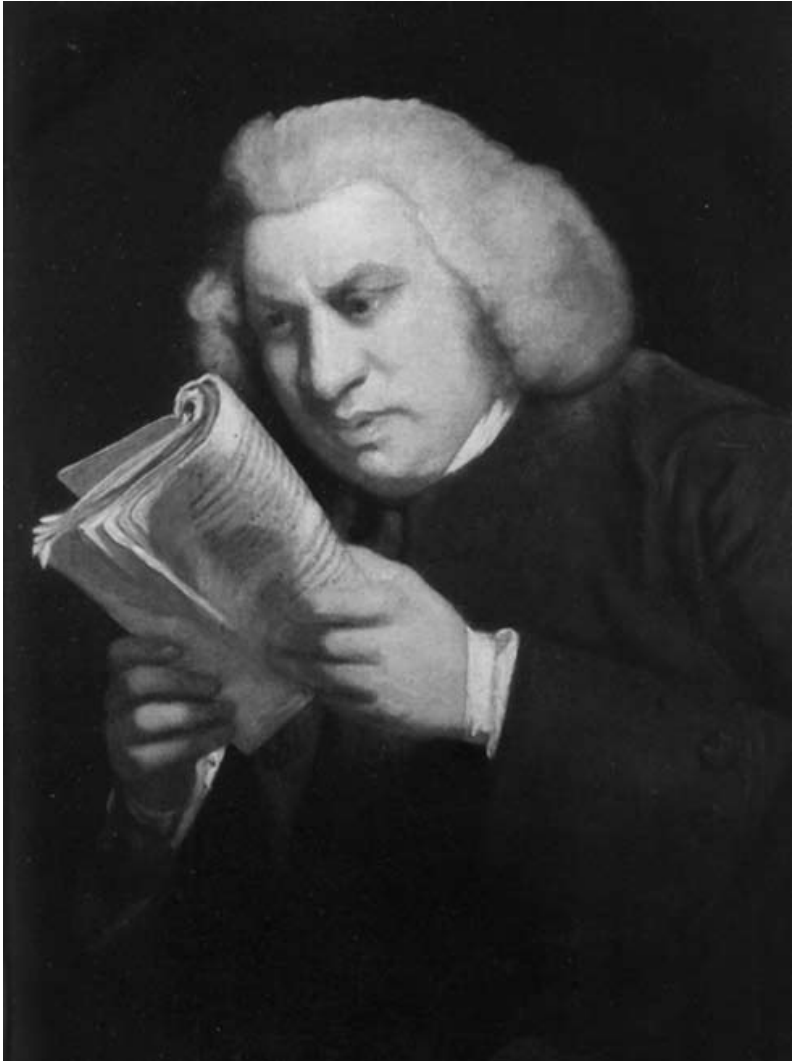
David Nokes

Jane Austen and Samuel Johnson have fared very differently in the modern world. I don't know how many of you watched *Lost in Austen* this week – but it was just the latest in the apparently endless array of works which may be traced back, whether legitimately or not, to Jane Austen's influence. Whereas Johnson, although remarkably celebrated during the later stages of his life, is now almost unread. Next year will be his tercentenary, and there will be some fuss made. But I don't expect there will be a *Lost in Johnson* done (which may be a good thing – there are some virtues to being *less* well known).

Johnson, though he was born here in Lichfield, became very much a Londoner, a member of clubs, a talker, a celebrated man, whereas Jane Austen throughout her life kept very much to her family and friends in Hampshire, only occasionally going up to London, and only really speaking her mind in letters to her sister Cassandra. But for nine years from December 1775 to December 1784, the two of them, Jane Austen and Samuel Johnson, were contemporaries. He lived in the centre of London, with occasional forays up here to Lichfield. She was brought up in Steventon, near Basingstoke. In 1775, while she was being born, he was sending letters to Elizabeth Montagu – a woman she would have loved to know – expressing annoyance that he had been forced to decline not one but two of Mrs Montagu's invitations. Mrs Montagu was not only one of the wealthiest women of the time, her riches coming from the coal that lay beneath her husband's vast estates around Newcastle, but she was also a leading member of Bluestocking society who held regular soirées in her Hill Street salon. To these soirées all the most glittering names of the 1770s were invited: Johnson, Joshua Reynolds, Horace Walpole and Edmund Burke; among the women, Fanny Burney, Hannah More, Elizabeth Carter and Hester Thrale.

In 1780 an off-shoot of this brilliant set established itself in Bath, where Mrs Thrale began, first in competition and later in company with Mrs Montagu, as a leader of fashionable society. Johnson was hauled in as a famous name to bolster up the Thrale party. Horace Walpole caught their competing styles when he observed them at a soirée: 'Mrs Montagu kept aloof from Johnson like the West from the East'; the two of them, like two rival cults or faiths, 'kept at different ends of the chamber, and set up altar against altar'.

Twenty years later Bath was still a centre for rivalry, though the nature of the competition had rather altered. Jane Austen, at that time still unknown, commented



Sir Joshua Reynolds, Samuel Johnson (oil on canvas)

upon the Pump Room, which had become the main scene for competitive fashions between the ladies who perambulated there. Writing about the hats she saw, she observed to Cassandra that ‘Flowers are very much worn ... & fruit is still more the thing. I have seen grapes, cherries, plumbs & apricots.’ But she couldn’t help observing too that it was ‘more natural to have flowers grow out of the head than fruit. What do you think?’

In a period of less than fifty years the baton had passed from Johnson, sitting scribbling on his three-legged chair in Fleet Street, to Jane Austen, hiding her

papers from callers at the family house at Chawton. He had written from the centre of things, as Addison had done, commenting on the bustle and enterprise of a vast and growing city, declaring that the full tide of human existence was at Charing Cross and that when a man was tired of London he was tired of life, 'for there is in London all that life can afford'. She wrote, from the seclusion of Chawton, commenting crisply on the things she saw around her: 'People get so horridly poor & economical in this part of the world that I have no patience with them. Kent [meaning her brother Edward Austen's house at Godmersham] is the only place for happiness. Everybody is rich there.'

Though neither of them was vain, in their writings they both celebrated universal themes. Here is Johnson, in his most famous poem, 'The Vanity of Human Wishes', beginning by stating the global reach of his ideas, as applicable to ancient Greece as to contemporary Britain:

Let Observation with extensive View
Survey mankind from China to Peru.

Jane Austen, or rather her narrator, speaks with equal certainty in the opening of *Pride and Prejudice*: 'It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife' (though her ironic tone implies this truth may be more apparent to the mothers of eligible daughters than to elderly childless widowers, like Johnson); its status as a 'truth' is not to say something about all human hopes and fears (as Johnson attempts to do), but something ironically apposite about the competitive instincts of particular ladies in a particular neighbourhood.

During the years that separated them, London retained and developed its importance for industry, trade and politics, but the literary world, led by the poets Wordsworth and Coleridge, Shelley and Byron, tended to abandon its dirty alleyways and seek a romantic world of lonely hills, solitary rivers and towering Alps. Jane Austen, though not at all romantic, with either a large or a small 'R', was typical of the period. She didn't compose from Chelsea, or even Hampstead, but from the depth of Hampshire. The way she applied her literary intelligence was different too. Examine Johnson and you will find a man whose work is very much constructed of axioms – truths tried and tested by the ancients – wittily applied to contemporary surroundings. 'Human life is everywhere a state in which much is to be endured, and little to be enjoyed,' he observes in *Rasselas*. On his tour of Scotland he knows 'that by a scrambling up a rock, I shall only see other rocks'. He was not greatly interested in or moved by scenery, even the magnificent landscapes of his Highland journey. He took his observations with a measuring stick, rather than with an open heart. Loch Ness, he noted, was 'about twenty-four miles long, and from one to two miles broad'; and 'a blade of grass is always a blade of grass, whether in one country or another'. Jane Austen, on the other hand, is much given to noting details that Johnson would consider unimportant; specifying idiosyncrasies of character which his instinct would be to ignore. She examines the minutiae of lives, whether of the Digweeds or Prowtings in her neighbourhood, or of Miss Bates and Harriet Smith in *Emma*. '3 or 4 families in a country village is the very

thing,' she notes. It is in the finely delineated detail of her writing, the distinctive timbre she gives to a character's speech and the particular tone her narrator adopts towards their development, that her genius lies.

Yet Johnson was someone whom Jane Austen greatly revered and admired. Writing to Cassandra in February 1807, she calls him 'my dear Dr Johnson': 'But like my dear Dr Johnson I believe I have dealt more in Notions than Facts.' Such reverence was widely shared at the time. Since the appearance of the *Dictionary*, Johnson had worked at establishing himself as one of the first great literary personalities. His opinion was sought out not just by Prime Ministers like Lords Bute and North, but by the King himself in a famous meeting which they had in the library of Buckingham House, when they discussed books and libraries and the King left Johnson with the idea which, a decade later, became his *Lives of the Poets*. Jane Austen, on the other hand, felt rather more uneasy (though flattered) by her distant contact with the royal family. She wrote to Martha Lloyd in 1812 – just after the publication of *Pride and Prejudice* had suddenly made her famous – discussing her opinion of the Princess of Wales's letter of grievances against her husband, which had just been published. 'Poor woman,' she wrote, 'I shall support her as long as I can, because she *is* a woman, & because I hate her husband.' Yet when her husband, the Prince Regent, let it be known that he would welcome the dedication to him of her next novel, *Emma*, she felt she had to accept his offer, which was in reality a command, however equivocal she felt about him.

By the 1760s Johnson had acquired access to power and influence; he was a member of the Club, which met weekly and included in its membership people like Joshua Reynolds, Edmund Burke and Sheridan. His doings were repeated constantly in the press. Where Jane Austen was confined, by her sex and by her relative poverty, to family gatherings in Chawton, Johnson, though never rich, had risen, with the aid of his annual pension of £300 a year, to become a name (multiply by 100, and it becomes £30,000 – not a fortune, but enough to live on, reasonably handsomely). Both of them were Tories, something Jane Austen made much of; both of them were loyal members of the Church of England; both of them came from the provinces and spoke up for a sturdy kind of English tradition.

In what remains of this paper I want to trace gradual shifts of emphasis that distinguish Jane Austen and Johnson quite importantly. To do this I shall approach the subject somewhat sideways, invoking their attitude to the armed forces which, with Britain at the end of the Seven Years War having an enormous empire comprising both India and the whole of North America, was becoming increasingly important. For Jane Austen it was the Navy that was most significant. Two of her brothers, Frank and Charles, were sailors, rising eventually to be admirals. The navy was almost as important as the Church, in which her father, her elder brother James and, latterly, her brother Henry had their livings. For Johnson though, it was the army. His good friend in his younger days was Henry Hervey (younger son of the Earl of Bristol) who had a commission in the Dragoons, which he used to good effect with the ladies. Only much later on did Hervey find God, and a

well-off wife, at about the same time. He changed his name to Henry Aston, and acquired a living in the Church.

Jane Austen had a special affection for the Navy, making her last novel, *Persuasion*, deal with its characters, and making an important character, Fanny Price's brother William in *Mansfield Park*, a midshipman in the wake of the Trafalgar action. Johnson was quite the opposite. He hated the idea of the Navy particularly, and the sea generally. He wrote to Frances Reynolds, sister to Sir Joshua, in 1765 to warn her that if she really *must* visit Italy, she should go by land, not sea. 'I do not think the grossness of a Ship very suitable to a Lady,' he wrote; he added that her 'sudden folly' had quite disturbed him. Furthermore, although he occasionally swam at Brighton, under the strong influence of Henry and Hester Thrale, he was not convinced it did him any good. And he *loathed* the Navy: 'No man will be a sailor who has contrivance enough to get himself into a jail; for being in a ship is being in a jail, with the chance of being drowned.' The hardships of the naval life were particularly borne in upon him by his manservant, the negro Francis Barber, whom he'd helped to raise from the age of eleven, and who was really a kind of son to him (when he died he left all his wealth to him – 'little short of fifteen hundred pounds, including an annuity of seventy pounds' – multiply that by 100 and you see it's quite a lot). Barber rather liked the idea of the Navy, and whenever he got the chance he tried running away to sea, which caused Johnson endless headaches. He wrote to Smollett, who had influence at the Admiralty, to do what he could, begging that Francis Barber's 'delicate frame' might be spared the rigours of the naval life. Barber's plight was by no means lessened by the emergence of all kinds of societies, like the recently founded Marine Society to obtain 'a supply of two or three thousand mariners for the Navy'.

Johnson wrote to George Hay, a Lord of the Admiralty, petitioning him to discharge Frank Barber, a 'Negro Boy' whom he had treated 'with great tenderness'. As he was no seaman, it all might be transacted, he wrote, 'with little injury to the King's Service.' But Barber, described in the Muster Books as 'L.M.' [Landman], remained in the Navy for another six months and when he was discharged, made it clear it was 'without any wish of his own'. Deprived of Barber's assistance, Johnson moved at about this time just a matter of a couple of hundred yards to Gray's Inn, where his slovenly habits were observed by a Mrs C, an admirer who of course had never met Johnson, and her companion, known to us as 'Mr M'. After thundering at the outer door for near a quarter of an hour:

Mr M at last peeped through the key-hole, and observed Johnson just issuing from his bed, in his shirt, without a night-cap, the *pot de chambre* in one hand and the key in the other. In this situation he unlocked the door, when, spying a lady, he gravely turned round, 'begged she would walk into another room, and he would have the pleasure of waiting on her immediately'. As soon as ever Mrs C had recovered her surprise, she observed to Mr M: 'what a fortunate thing it was for her that Johnson's milliner had not cheated him of his linen as much *before* as she had *behind*.'

Johnson's political attitudes were equally disorderly. He was asked by the publishers of the *British Magazine* to write a piece for their first number, and contributed an essay on 'The Bravery of the English Common Soldier' in which the word 'common' receives special attention. Johnson boasts of 'a kind of epidemick bravery' diffused through all the ranks of English soldiery, that shows that a 'peasantry of heroes' may 'vie with the courage of their general'. Wars this common soldier fights in may be misconceived, but his valour cannot be faulted; the 'equality of English privileges' means he recognises few superiors, and thinks no better of 'his leader than of himself'. Born 'without a master' he seeks 'no protection from others'; and those who in peacetime complain of his insolence should remember that 'insolence in peace is bravery in war'. Shortly afterwards he wrote an equally eloquent tribute to the English common soldier's antagonist, the French soldier, when asked to do so by Thomas Hollis from the Committee on French Prisoners. John Wesley had recently visited these prisoners at Bristol and seen 'above eleven hundred of them ... confined in that little place, without any thing to lie on but a little dirty straw, or anything to cover them but a few foul, thin rags'. The result was that 'they died, like rotten sheep'. Hollis was a republican, Wesley a Methodist, and the prisoners they commented on were mainly Catholics. What better defender could they have to write on their behalf than a Tory member of the Church of England? Johnson performed the task willingly and eloquently. 'For prisoners of war' he wrote,

there is no legal provision; we see their distress, and are certain of its cause; we know that they are poor and naked, and poor and naked without a crime ... let animosity and hostility cease together; and no man be longer deemed an enemy, than while his sword is drawn against us.

It is testimony to his words that, two centuries later, they are reprinted, in French, in the official journal of the International Red Cross. Johnson received five guineas for the piece and the money must have been welcome to him. The idea of having shirts and greatcoats distributed to the prisoners may have seemed ironically appealing for, at the time – in the 1760s – after he had published the *Dictionary* but before he was awarded his pension, he was desperately poor. Murphy tells how one visitor to Johnson 'found an author by profession without pen, ink, or paper'; Johnson's notes of hand, indicating debts to Newberry of £30 and £40, suggest a man on the brink of destitution. Johnson was twice imprisoned for debt, very briefly on both occasions; but it's something one can't imagine happening to Jane Austen. The nearest she came to prison was when her aunt Mrs Leigh Perrot was accused of theft and briefly incarcerated. Mrs Austen volunteered to have Jane stay with her aunt and uncle to keep up their spirits. The offer was luckily refused.

Frances Reynolds tells a story that she, her brother Joshua and Johnson called one day on Frances and Charlotte Cotterell, and that Johnson was the last to enter.

When the servant maid, seeing this uncouth and dirty figure of a man, and not conceiving he could be one of the company ... laid hold of his coat just as he

was going up the stairs, and pulled him back again, saying, 'You, fellow, what is your business here? I suppose you intended to rob the house.'

Sir Joshua told another story of the visit which has much the same impact. The Misses Cotterell were engrossed in the company of the Duchess of Argyll, and neglected Johnson as 'low company of whom they were somewhat ashamed'. Johnson lowered himself to meet such condescension by addressing himself loudly to Reynolds and asking 'How much do you think you and I could get in a week, if we were to *work as hard* as we could?' The role of the 'common man', whether soldier or mechanic, was one Johnson greatly affected; first, because, being poor, he was not much above them; second because, being angry, he could understand their resentment; and third because, being human, he reached out to their sufferings. Many years later, in Lichfield, he picked up a book in what had been his father's shop, examined it and 'recollected the binding to be the work of his own hands'; he was one of few men, in the eighteenth century or now, who knew not only how to write, but how to print and bind the books he treated so cavalierly. When the playwright Arthur Murphy first met Johnson, he found him 'all covered with soot like a chimney-sweeper, in a little room, with an intolerable heat and strange smell'.

For Jane Austen and people of her generation the war with revolutionary France, which under Buonaparte became imperial France, was central to their way of thinking. One of her closest friends was her cousin the countess Eliza de Feuillide whose first husband, the count, was executed by the Committee of Public Safety in 1794. The war went on, almost unabated, from 1793 to 1815, but a crucial battle took place at sea, off Cape Trafalgar near Cadiz in Southern Spain, an action in which her brother Frank, captain of the *Canopus*, a prize ship originally *Le Franklin*, was intimately involved. He had chased the French Admiral Villeneuve's fleet all the way across the Atlantic, and back. At home the whole family were busily scouring their globe and reading their newspapers, trying to work out where he was. Frank was also about to be married, to Mary Gibson who came from a good family in Ramsgate. Visiting the town while he had been employed to defend the coast a few years earlier, Frank had soon got the reputation of being 'the officer who knelt at church', something which was then not at all common. Johnson visited a ship-of-the-line that was kept at Ramsgate a generation earlier and was frankly astonished by the foul language of one of the commanders. He asked him, most politely, 'not to use one oath more than was absolutely required for the service of his Majesty'. Jane Austen did not care for Ramsgate. When a Kentish acquaintance talked 'of fixing at Ramsgate', she remarked in a letter; 'Bad Taste!'. Back off Cadiz on 28 September 1805, Nelson was running short of supplies and signalled the *Canopus* from his own ship, the *Victory*, to go to Gibraltar to fetch fresh water and supplies. Frank had no option but to agree, but didn't like the errand-boy nature of the assignment. 'I do not profess to like fighting for its own sake,' he wrote to Mary, 'but if there has been an action with the combined fleets, I shall ever consider the day on which I sailed from the squadron as the most inauspicious of my life.' He sailed away on his

errand just as the French and Spanish ships left Cadiz harbour and on 21 October 1805 the battle of Trafalgar took place. When Frank heard of it, the great victory but also the death of Nelson, he could think only of his own loss: 'To lose all share in the glory of a day which surpasses all which ever went before, is what I cannot think of with any degree of patience.'

Trafalgar immediately became an heroic national symbol. In *Persuasion* Jane Austen makes Admiral Croft a veteran of 'the Trafalgar action' and in *Mansfield Park* she has her midshipman William Price pay special tribute to Frank's own ship, asking where another ship, the *Thrush*, lay at Spithead. 'Near the *Canopus*' he is told. But fairly soon, she found that this symbol of national triumph was rapidly becoming an excuse for national humbug. In *Sanditon* her enterprising Mr Parker greets his visitors: 'One other hill brings us to Sanditon.... You will not think I have made a bad exchange, when we reach Trafalgar House – which by the bye, I almost wish I had not named Trafalgar – for Waterloo is more the thing now. However, Waterloo is in reserve.' Trafalgar and Waterloo have rapidly become fashionable names for Mr Parker's new, ugly seaside boarding-houses.

I come, finally, to a more recent symbol of national heroism, the Falkland Islands, which were, you may not know, under threat in the 18th century, but from Spain, rather than Argentina. In 1771 Johnson wrote his *Thoughts on the Late Transactions Respecting Falkland's Islands* in which he remarked dismally on the islands, describing them in bleak but accurate enough terms: 'a few spots of earth, which, in the deserts of the ocean, had almost escaped human notice', of which 'the soil was nothing but a bog, with no better prospect than that of barren mountains'. And this, he quotes Captain John Macbride as saying, 'is summer'. 'That such a settlement may be of use in war, no man that considers its situation will deny. But war is not the whole business of life.' War was however an important preoccupation of William Pitt the Elder who, as Earl of Chatham, fulminated in the House of Lords in a highly bellicose manner: 'I ... never met with an instance of candour or dignity in [the Spaniards'] proceedings; nothing but low cunning, trick, and artifice.' Against such loud clamours for war, Johnson offered these sober reflections:

The life of a modern soldier is ill represented by heroick fiction. War has means of destruction more formidable than the cannon and the sword. Of the thousands and ten thousands that perished in our late contests with France and Spain, a very small part ever felt the stroke of an enemy; the rest languished in tents and ships, amidst damps and putrefaction; pale, torpid, spiritless, and helpless; gasping and groaning, unpitied among men made obdurate by long continuance of hopeless misery.

The Prime Minister, Lord North, held firm, never giving up the British claim to sovereignty yet doing nothing to push the Spanish into war: 'The real crime of the ministry is, that they have found the means of avoiding their own ruin' was Johnson's comment. His sympathy in all these matters, and in the American War of Independence which broke out just four years later, was not for the politicians, Pitt or North or Rockingham, but for the common soldier: the man called upon

to fulfil their orders and usually dying, not in some heroic action, but from fever, cold or hunger in some foreign land.

A judgement. Johnson always says what he thinks, and what he thinks is built upon his experience as someone who had made it up the hard way. He knew what poverty was. He had been forced to leave Oxford after barely a year because his family could no longer afford the fees. Unlike the Austens, whose sons James and Henry (the ones who didn't go into the Navy and become, eventually, admirals) went up there, and qualified themselves for the Church. It was a bitter experience and he stayed away from Oxford for twenty years until, having written the *Dictionary* – and he insists upon that word 'written', not compiled – he went to finish off his work on the Grammar of the English Language, and to take an MA, which he only *just* got in time.

He didn't notice outer appearances, or he made a joke of it when he was forced to. One day when going with Thomas Percy to visit Goldsmith he was very nattily done up in a new suit, with a new, nicely powdered wig. In short, everything was 'so perfectly dissimilar' to how he normally appeared that Percy was forced to comment on this 'singular transformation'. 'Why sir,' said Johnson, 'I hear that Goldsmith, who is a very great sloven, justifies his disregard of cleanliness and decency by quoting my practice; I am desirous to show him a better example.' It's interesting, I think, that Joshua Reynolds, who earned at least £5,000 a year – half a million in today's terms – and must have had a fine eye for appearance, thought nothing of Johnson's appearance, which was always fairly scruffy. He rather liked the scruffiness of poverty, even when he could afford to live better, which wasn't a case of affecting to be poor, or street credible or whatever – he just didn't *think* about it. At least until his friendship with the Thrales, who put him under some gentle pressure to smarten himself up. He kept his house at Bolt Court as a kind of shelter for all sorts of impoverished people: blind Anna Williams, poor Robert Levet, Mrs Desmoulins, black Frank Barber, Poll Carmichael. Hester Thrale memorialised the fact of Robert Levet's death (Robert Levet, not qualified, acted as a sort of doctor to the poor of London) with a sudden burst of irritation against Johnson's sense of charity. 'He lived with Johnson as a sort of *necessary Man*, or Surgeon to the wretched Household he held in Bolt Court,' she fumed; 'where Blind Mrs Williams, Dropsical Mrs Desmoulins, Black Francis & his White Wife's Bastard with a wretched Mrs White, and a Thing that he called Poll; shared his Bounty, & increased his Dirt.' She didn't see these people as he did, as ordinary people as interesting as she, Garrick, Goldsmith or Reynolds were, and as deserving of his kindness. Johnson's compassion is boundless; he gave away about a quarter of what he had to the poor he met in the streets of London and, as we have seen, in a final gesture, in his will gave all his remaining money to Frank Barber – much disapproved of by Hawkins, who had known him and was his first full biographer.

Jane Austen was different: she knew about, and cared about appearances. She was not rich: she was the second daughter in a family of eight children, supported by her father's clerical income, and felt herself to be poor; but she could make

and mend clothes and supervise the cooking of dinners and if she spent money on new gloves or a new bonnet it was worth mentioning. And, though she gave money to the poor, as was of course expected of her as a daughter of the parsonage, she did it with a sense of what was expected, not with his bountiful – or guilty – sense of giving. ‘How horrible it is to have so many people killed,’ she exclaims in 1811, on reading first accounts of the battle of Albuera. ‘And what a blessing that one cares for none of them!’ And, if that sounds callous, at the very least an unfortunate accident of phrasing, try this from two years earlier: ‘Thank Heaven! We have had no one to care for particularly among the Troops – no one in fact nearer to us than Sir John himself’ (that’s Sir John Moore). There were some 6,000 dead at the battle of Albuera, but I think Jane Austen has the stiff upper lip of her class, and, of course, her mask of irony, so instinctive that she can’t abandon it, even in her letters to her sister. ‘Kill poor Mrs Sclater if you like it,’ she writes in one, feeling delighted with herself. ‘If I *am* a wild beast, I cannot help it. It is not my own fault.’ ‘I shall eat Ice & drink French wine, & be above Vulgar Economy,’ she boasts. All these comments, and many others like them, would be quite anathema to Johnson. Yes, he can make a comment, transcribed by Boswell, about women preachers: ‘a woman preaching is like a dog walking on its hinder legs – it is not done well, but you are surprised to find it done at all’ – which of course now sounds very different because of the emancipation of women and the emergence of female clergy. But his general style is unironic, whereas Jane Austen’s whole art depends upon that friction between what is said and *precisely* what is meant. That difference – a real difference in tone and sensibility – comes, I think, from the fact that Jane Austen is the first, and possibly the greatest writer in a new genre, the novel, which allows, invites, the writer to utilise her techniques to develop characters in a way that makes them live.

Johnson’s skills are all centred upon himself. One does not quote Imlac from *Rasselas* saying ‘He that shall walk with vigour three hours a day will pass in seven years a space equal to the circumference of the globe’ because the sentiments and phrasing are clearly Johnson’s own; yet one does associate the warmth of Marianne Dashwood’s repudiation of such terms as ‘liking’ and ‘esteeming’ a person with her passionate sensibility, and enjoys reading the novel which brings these qualities into a resolution with her sister Elinor’s good sense. The Dashwood sisters are *characters* in a way Johnson did not conceive of, and could not create. In the *Dictionary* he defines character as ‘a representation of any man as to his personal qualities’; but it is the fourth meaning of the word, and refers specifically to *men*. ‘Novel’ he slips in as a new meaning altogether, taken from the French ‘nouvelle’, ‘A small tale, generally of love’, and it’s quite clear from the quotations he takes to illustrate its meaning (Dryden calls it foreign and trifling, Prior has a ‘coxcomb’s novel’ bringing ‘mangl’d fame’) what he thinks of it. Johnson was a great man, making his opinions known to all the best in society; Jane Austen sheltered herself at Chawton, from where she used her waspish wit to comment on those around her, in private letters to her sister Cassandra.

Johnson and Jane Austen are at their closest, I think, in their reactions to Fanny Burney. In Burney's novel *Cecilia* Jane Austen found a phrase which would bring her to public fame, 'pride and prejudice'. She was so taken by Burney's talents, she once fantasised about marrying 'a young Mr D'Arblay', just as Fanny Burney had become Madame D'Arblay. Johnson too was enchanted by the young Fanny Burney's first novel, *Evelina*, which, he said, had 'passages in it which might do honour to Richardson'. These sentiments quite 'crazed' Burney. 'Dr. Johnson's approbation!' she said, and had such 'a flight of spirits' she danced a jig.

I think it's possible that, had he so expressed himself about *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen would also have danced a jig. She might even have enticed 'dear Dr Johnson' to come and join her.

*'There cannot be a more worthy young man':
Edward Cooper (1770-1833)*

Deirdre Le Faye

The first part of this article is a short biography of the Revd Edward Cooper, and the second is a consideration of how Mrs Austen and her daughters might have occupied their time during their visit to him at Hamstall Ridware in Staffordshire in the summer of 1806. Edward Cooper was a first cousin of Jane Austen, being the son of Mrs Austen's elder sister Jane Leigh (1736-83), and the Revd Dr Edward Cooper (1728-92), who lived at Henley, Bath, and later Sonning-on-Thames. Edward junior was born on 1 July 1770, and his sister Jane was born on 27 June 1771, so both were close in age to their Austen cousins, and in earlier years the Austen and Cooper families were in fairly close contact with each other. Jane Austen herself wrote: 'I like first Cousins to be first Cousins, & interested about each other. They are but one remove from Br. & Sr. —';¹ but from other references in her letters it would seem that as time passed she began to be irritated by Edward's Evangelical enthusiasm and perhaps rather sanctimonious piety, which evidently lowered him in her estimation and affections.

Information about Edward's youth comes from Austen family tradition, plus scholastic, clerical and civic records. The Revd Dr Edward Cooper was a wealthy man, so took his young family to Bath where they lived at smart addresses, Royal Crescent and Bennett Street. In about 1782 Jane Cooper went to her aunt Mrs Cawley, Dr Cooper's sister, in Oxford for some domestic tuition, and presently her Austen cousins, Jane and Cassandra, were sent from Steventon to join her there. A few months later, Mrs Cawley moved to Southampton, taking the three little girls with her, and in the summer of 1783 they fell ill with typhus fever. Mrs

Austen and Mrs Cooper went to Southampton to retrieve their ailing daughters, and Mrs Cooper caught the infection and died a few weeks later in the autumn of 1783. It was then that the Revd Dr Edward Cooper left Bath and became vicar of Sonning-on-Thames, Berks.²

From 1784-88 Edward Cooper was at Eton, and in 1785 Jane Cooper went to the Abbey House School in Reading, again accompanied by the Austen daughters. There is a pleasant family tradition that in October 1785 the two young Edwards, Cooper and Austen, visited Reading and treated their sisters to a dinner at one of the local inns.³ At the Christmas holidays during the late 1780s Edward and Jane stayed at Steventon – obviously Mrs Austen was being a very good aunt, trying to compensate them for being motherless – and took part in the family theatricals organised by James Austen.⁴ On leaving Eton in April 1788, Edward went up to Queen's College, Oxford, and while there helped James and Henry Austen write some issues of their satirical magazine *The Loiterer*. He took his degree in 1792 and became a Fellow of All Souls.

For the next few years the course of Edward's life can be traced in the journals of his Oxfordshire neighbour Mrs Philip Lybbe Powys. The Powys family lived at Hardwick, near Whitchurch, Oxon, and later on at Fawley, Bucks, just north of Henley; they had two sons and a daughter, Caroline, a little younger than Jane Cooper. Mrs Powys records numerous family parties, such as going to take tea with the Coopers at Sonning on 23 March 1789, after which they went on to Henley to see the illuminations there in honour of the King's recovery. In 1790 the Coopers took 15-year-old Caroline Powys to watch a military review; in July 1791 Jane Cooper stayed for a week at Hardwick and went with the family on 'a water party to Cliveden spring'; and later that year, when the Powys family went to the first Henley ball of the season, Jane Cooper was staying with them once more.⁵

In 1792 the Powys and Cooper families joined together for a trip to the Isle of Wight, from 26 June to 9 August. During this trip Jane Cooper met Captain Thomas Williams, RN, and became engaged to him before returning home. Her father, who had been in failing health for some time, died at the end of August, and for the time being Jane went to live with the Austens in Steventon. Captain Williams and Jane were married there on 11 December 1792, with Edward Cooper as a witness together with Cassandra and Jane Austen.⁶ The young couple went off to live in the Isle of Wight, and for the next few years visits to them are mentioned in Mrs Powys's journals.

As Edward was now on his own, it is not surprising that during the next few months there are several mentions of his visits to stay with the Powys family, culminating in the happy entry Mrs Powys made in her journal: '1793, 14 March, was the day our dear Caroline was married to Mr Cooper, son of the late Dr Cooper of Sonning, Berks, a match that gave all her friends the highest satisfaction, as there cannot be a more worthy young man.' Edward had by now taken Holy Orders and became curate of Harpsden, near Henley, where his Leigh grandfather had been the incumbent earlier in the eighteenth century. On 11 August 1793 the

Powys family went to Harpsden and heard Edward preach for the first time since his ordination – ‘a very excellent sermon he gave us’; and some months later, when Edward preached to them during a visit to Fawley, Mrs Powys commented again – ‘an excellent sermon indeed.’⁷

Cooper babies soon appeared on the scene: Edward Philip was born 27 October 1794 and baptised 3 December at Harpsden, when his godparents included Jane Williams and Henry Austen. Isabella Mary followed him on 29 November 1795, baptised at Harpsden 1 January 1796; and on 12 January 1796 Edward and Caroline and the two babies set off to stay with the Williams couple in the Isle of Wight, calling on the Austens for a week en route. Jane Austen wrote to Cassandra to say that the family had arrived at Steventon and were in good health: ‘the little boy is very like Dr Cooper & the little girl is to resemble Jane, they say.’⁸ A third child, Cassandra Louisa, was born on 24 May 1797, and Mrs Austen was one of her godmothers when the christening party was held at Harpsden on 7 July.⁹

In August 1798 an unexpected tragedy occurred, when Jane Williams was killed in a road accident at Newport, IOW, leaving no children. Mrs Powys was worried that the sudden shock would make Edward ill, as he was ‘one of the most affectionate of brothers’,¹⁰ but luckily this was not the case. A few months later the old Hon. Mary Leigh presented Edward to the Leigh family living of St Michael & All Angels, Hamstall Ridware, a village about ten miles north-west of the city of Lichfield; and Jane Austen told Cassandra: ‘We collect from his letter that he means to reside there, in which he shows his wisdom. Staffordshire is a good way off; so we shall see nothing more of them till, some fifteen years hence, the Miss Coopers are presented to us, fine, jolly, handsome, ignorant girls. The living is valued at 140L a year, but perhaps it may be improvable.’¹¹ (Is the comment about Edward’s daughters perhaps a sideswipe at Caroline Cooper herself? – did Jane consider her as being handsome and jolly but ignorant?)



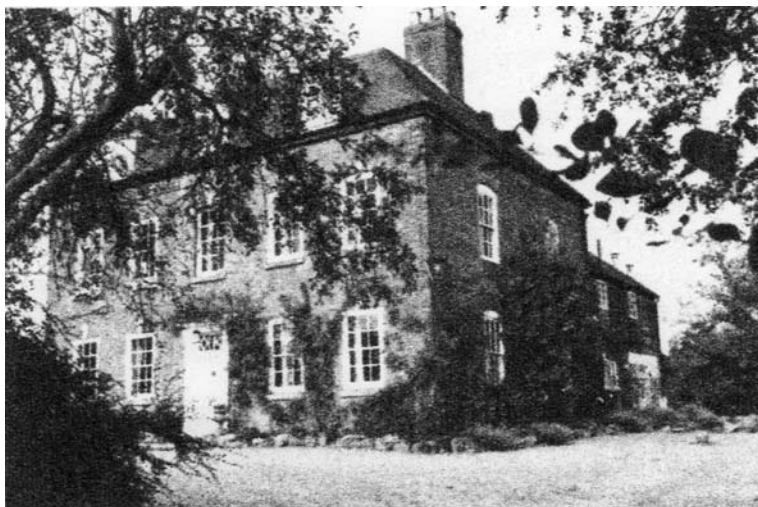
St Michael and All Angels, Hamstall Ridware

Mrs Powys was very busy writing up these family events in her journal: ‘1799, 30th January: We went from Hardwick, to stay with Caroline, while Cooper went

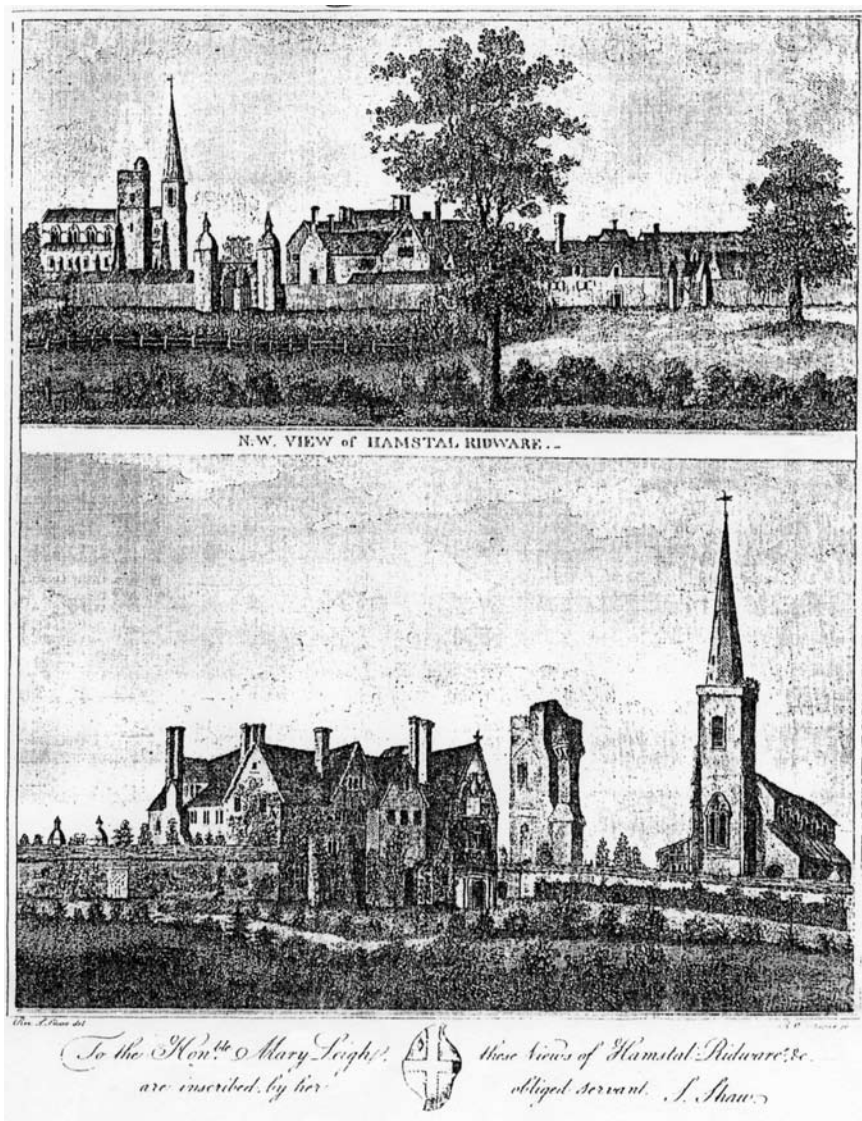
into Staffordshire to see his Living at Hamstall Ridware, that Mrs Leigh had just been so kind to present him to, ye roads were so bad by the snow & frost, we were obliged to go round by Caversham, but got safe to Harpsden by dinner.’ Five weeks later a fourth baby, Jane Elizabeth Leigh, was born – obviously named in honour of the beneficent Leigh family – and in the summer: ‘Cooper & Caroline went to see their Living in Staffordshire ... much pleased.’¹²

The Austen family paid a last visit to Edward at Harpsden in August 1799; in September: ‘Caroline and Cooper went to his new Living in Staffordshire for a few days to furnish their house; ye four Children and Lucy & Mary [nursemaids] came to us;’¹³ and in October 1799 the Coopers finally moved to take up residence at Hamstall Ridware. Although the wealthy Powys family could afford to travel to Staffordshire every year, the Austens, as Jane had prophesied, were not able to keep in such close touch, and there are not many references to Edward and his family in her letters hereafter.

In the summer of 1800 Mrs Powys made her first visit to see her daughter in her new home, a two-day journey from Fawley via Oxford, Stratford-on-Avon and Birmingham, finally arriving for dinner at Lichfield (probably at the George Hotel, as this was the one recommended in road books of the time), ‘where Mr Cooper sent a servant to meet us, with the key of a gentleman’s grounds, going through which shortened our way to Hamstall Ridware, where we got to tea. Cooper had walked about a mile from their house on our arrival, at which our dearest Caroline ran out to meet us ...’ Mrs Powys makes no comment about the rectory itself – presumably the Coopers had told her all about it beforehand – but says that the church, St Michael & All Angels, ‘is a very neat old Spire Building of stone, having two side Ailes, Chancel, &c, and makes a magnificent appearance as a Village Church.’ The village itself was quite small, only about 400 inhabitants.¹⁴



Hamstall Ridware rectory



*Hamstall Ridware: engraving from drawings by Stebbing Shaw,
circa 1797*

The rectory is now privately owned and not open to visitors: it is a handsome house of dark red brick, three storeys high and five bays wide, with an extension at the rear. The contemporary local historian recorded that it was built by 'one of the previous incumbents about 1730; is 42 ft long by 36 ft deep, with a dairy, brew house and coalhouse adjoining; a dove house, one barn, two stables, a wood hovel and cart hovel, court garden and orchard, plus backside, rickyard and fold yard.'¹⁵

There was also a manor house, Hamstall Hall, a large rambling Tudor/Jacobean building, which had vast rooms, huge fireplaces, a minstrels' gallery and even a watch-tower at one end of the range. The Hamstall estate had come to the Leigh family in 1601 and they lived in the Hall for several decades before removing to their main estate at Stoneleigh in Warwickshire, after which the Hall was always leased out – at the end of the eighteenth century it was occupied by a Mr Edward Riley and his family, a gentleman who had botanical interests, and also kept some antiquarian objects in the house for display to visitors. The Leighs sold the estate early in the twentieth century and much of the Hall has been demolished since then, taking the house back more or less to its Tudor origins and size; the high brick garden wall with its large entrance gate, flanked by two early seventeenth-century gatehouses, still survives, as does the watch-tower, now very dilapidated. The farm buildings behind the Hall remained in use after the Leighs sold out; they were converted into the Ridware Arts Centre in the 1980s and later into private houses.¹⁶

The next news of the Coopers comes from Jane Austen's letter of 21-22 January 1801 to Cassandra, following the birth of their fifth child, Frederick Leigh: 'Caroline was only brought to bed on the 7th of this month, so that her recovery does seem pretty rapid. I have heard twice from Edward on the occasion, & his letters have each been exactly what they ought to be – cheerful & amusing. – He dares not write otherwise to *me* – but perhaps he might be obliged to purge himself from the guilt of writing Nonsense by filling his shoes with whole pease for a week afterwards.' It would seem from this that Jane felt Edward was growing so puritanical as to consider joviality to be sinful, requiring penance for expiation. And only four days later, in her letter of 25 January 1801, Jane suddenly sounds very exasperated with him: 'Edward Cooper is so kind as to want us all to come to Hamstall this summer, instead of going to the sea, but we are not so kind as to mean to do it. The summer after, if you please, Mr Cooper, but for the present we greatly prefer the sea to all our relations.'¹⁷ She gives no explanation for this expression of annoyance, but it may be possible to guess the cause, from events in later years which are discussed below. Three more babies soon arrived at Hamstall Ridware: Henry Gisborne (1802), Philip Arden (1803), and finally Warren (1805), completing Edward's family of five boys and three girls.

In April 1806 Edward Cooper invited Mrs Austen to visit them later in the year, and this time his invitation was accepted.¹⁸ Mrs Austen and her daughters left Bath for the last time on 2 July 1806¹⁹ and stayed for two or three weeks in Clifton; they then probably travelled via Gloucester, Cheltenham and Stow-on-the-Wold to arrive at the home of Mrs Austen's cousin the Revd Thomas Leigh, at Adlestrop in Gloucestershire, in the latter half of July. During July there had been the unexpected event of the death of the old Hon. Mary Leigh in London, and Joseph Hill, the family lawyer, advised the Revd Thomas Leigh to take possession of her Stoneleigh estate in Warwickshire as soon as possible to forestall other claimants. Mr Leigh confirmed to Joseph Hill, on 1 August 1806: 'Mrs and Miss

Austens will be of ye party [to Stoneleigh], & will then be so far on their road to Mr Cooper's whom they are going to visit at Hamstall.²⁰

On 5 August the Adlestrop party set off for Stoneleigh, and on 13 August Mrs Austen wrote from there to her daughter-in-law Mary Lloyd, James's wife, with a description of the other house guests and the lavish lifestyle of the senior branch of the Leighs, adding that during the past few days they had enjoyed an excursion to the ruins of Kenilworth Castle (about 3 miles away), were going to visit the impressive Warwick Castle that day (about 6 miles away) and ending up: 'Tomorrow we depart, Hamstall is 38 miles from hence.'²¹ It would seem likely that they too travelled via Lichfield and the George Hotel, and perhaps Edward Cooper or his servant came to meet them there as he had done for Mrs Powys in 1800. A week later Edward wrote to the Revd Thomas Leigh at Stoneleigh, assuring him of the good health of all the family, including Mrs Austen and her daughters; but unfortunately very soon thereafter all the eight children went down with whooping cough, which must rather have spoilt the enjoyment of the Austens' visit for all concerned. On 26 September Edward wrote to Joseph Hill: 'Mrs Austen and her daughters after staying with us about five weeks, have left us for Southampton' – adding that the children's whooping cough was happily not severe. Joseph Hill replied to this letter on 4 October: 'My Wife & I were happy to have had the Pleasure of meeting the Miss Austens they are very sensible elegant Young Women & of the very best Dispositions.'²² The Cooper children were lucky to have the illness only mildly, but even so Jane caught the infection from them and succumbed to it during November after arriving in Southampton.²³

During July and August 1807 Edward and Caroline and all their eight children, plus a governess and two nursery-maids, made a round trip of friends and relations in the southern part of England. Mrs Powys recorded: 'On the same day ye 14 [July], Cooper, Caroline their 8 Children Miss Morse the Governess and two servants came from Staffordshire, to pay several visits in different places; they got to Mr Leighs at Stoneleigh ye same day, went to Dr Ishams at Oxford ye 25, to Warwick ye 27 ... Coopers four youngest Boys came to Fawley and ye two Servants Lucy & Sally, little Jane was left at Hardwick, Cooper Caroline Edward Isabella & Cassandra went to Mrs Austins at Southampton' – for a fortnight beginning on 10 August.²⁴ This was probably the last time the Coopers and Austens actually met; their visit is not mentioned in any of Jane's letters, perhaps because Jane and Cassandra were not apart at the time, or perhaps Jane made some sharp comments about Edward and his children which Cassandra later censored.

The following year, in October 1808, Edward (Austen) Knight's young wife Elizabeth Bridges died suddenly at Godmersham in Kent, soon after giving birth to their eleventh child; and Jane told Cassandra, who was then staying at Godmersham: 'I have written to Edwd. Cooper, & hope he will not send *one of his Letters of cruel comfort to my poor Brother ...*' [my emphasis].²⁵ How did Jane know that Edward Cooper was given to writing letters of 'cruel comfort'? – in the plural, indeed, letters? Did he write thus tactlessly to the Austens upon the occasions of the bereavements they had suffered: the death of James's first wife,

Anne Mathew, in 1795; of Cassandra's fiancé Tom Fowle in 1797; of the Revd George Austen in 1805; or perhaps upon Mrs Leigh-Perrot's arrest in Bath in 1799 on a charge of shoplifting? There seems to be an implication that Edward Cooper could sound painfully like Mr Collins, in his letter to Mr Bennet upon Lydia's elopement²⁶: 'I feel myself called upon, by our relationship, and my situation in life, to condole with you on the grievous affliction you are now suffering under ... Be assured, my dear Sir, that Mrs Collins and myself sincerely sympathise with you, and all your respectable family, in your present distress, which must be of the bitterest kind, because proceeding from a cause which no time can remove. No arguments shall be wanting on my part, that can alleviate so severe a misfortune ...' Did Edward Cooper write in similar tones to Mr Leigh Perrot at the time of Mrs Leigh Perrot's arrest and imprisonment in Ilchester, followed by her trial in 1800? – and did an indignant Mr Leigh Perrot send on the letter to the Austen family? Was this why Jane was suddenly sounding so cross, in her letter of 25 January 1801, in wanting to avoid visiting the Coopers that summer – and indeed 'all our relations' – because she did not want to be dragged into a family quarrel between Edward and the Leigh Perrots? It is noticeable that this Collins letter is not really necessary to the plot of *Pride and Prejudice* – the paragraph could be removed from the chapter and its omission would make no difference; did Jane remember Edward Cooper's tactlessness when she revised 'First Impressions' for publication, and feel that his letter, or a parody of it, was worthy of an addition to *P&P* as a family in-joke?

In 1809 the Leigh family presented Edward to a second living, not far from Hamstall Ridware, that of St Peter's, Yoxall, a much larger village on the edge of Needwood Forest, so his income would be considerably increased. He also had a congenial friend there, the Revd Thomas Gisborne (1758-1846), living with his family of eight children at Yoxall Lodge. Mr Gisborne was a well-known author, having published *An Enquiry into the Duties of Men in the Higher Ranks and Middle Classes* in 1794, followed by *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* in 1797. The latter was presumably the book Jane Austen was reading in 1805, when she wrote to Cassandra: 'I am glad you recommended Gisborne, for having begun, I am pleased with it, and I had quite determined not to read it.'²⁷

Edward seems to have made Jane his correspondent, rather than Mrs Austen, and at the end of January 1809 she passed on his latest news to Cassandra: 'A great event happens this week at Hamstall, in young Edward's removal to school; he is going to Rugby & is very happy in the idea of it. – I wish his happiness may last, but it will be a great change, to become a raw school boy from being a pompous Sermon-Writer, & a domineering Brother. – It will do him good I dare say. Caroline has had a great escape from being burnt to death lately; – as her Husband gives the account, we must believe it true.'²⁸ Jane had had first-hand experience of Edward Philip's behaviour at Hamstall Ridware in 1806 and again in her home in Southampton in 1807, and evidently found him an unlikeable child. There seems to be a sardonic note in her last sentence – was Caroline Cooper given to dramatic exaggeration?

Perhaps encouraged by Mrs Powys's praise of his sermons, in 1802 Edward started publishing them, first as separate pamphlets and then collected into two volumes, 1804 and 1806; these were well received, and he continued with a series called *Sermons, Practical and Familiar*, published in six volumes between 1809-24. There were eventually twelve editions up to 1862, and some selected individual sermons were reprinted even as late as 1883. In January 1809 Edward sent his first volume of *Sermons, Practical and Familiar* to the Austens, which, as Jane commented rather dubiously to Cassandra, 'we are to like better than the two others; – they are professedly *practical*, & for the use of Country Congregations.'²⁹ Edward himself said that he was writing for the people who were often overlooked, that is, the illiterate part of the community; and years later it was claimed that 'he knew how to be *simple* without being *silly*, and *plain* without being *dull*', thus succeeding in pleasing both the squire and the labourer in the congregation. In 1815 he published another volume, but these definitely grated upon the Austen family, and Jane wrote: 'We do not much like Mr Cooper's new Sermons; – they are fuller of Regeneration & Conversion than ever – with the addition of his zeal in the cause of the Bible Society.'³⁰

And then, almost the last we hear of Edward in the Austen family records, shows him at his worst, Mr Collins to the life. Mr Leigh Perrot died on 28 March 1817, and in his Will his legatees were his wife and his Austen nephews and nieces, with no mention of Edward Cooper and his children. Ten days later Edward wrote to Jane:

'You will probably be desirous of hearing my sentiments on the communication received from James of the disposal of my Uncle's Property. There was probably no reason why I should have expected any distinguished notice in his Will; but I certainly never seriously anticipated the probability of being altogether excluded from it. And I must express to you that the circumstance of being thus disowned by him at last does hurt me a good deal, because I did entertain a sincere regard & esteem for him. I had reason to suppose that I was no great Favourite with him; yet his manner towards me, whenever I happened to see him, was kind and friendly, & I never suspected him to harbour those unfavourable dispositions towards me of which he has left behind him so marked & convincing a proof. If however in thought or in act he has done me any injustice, I feel that I do most cordially forgive him. I trust that for his own sake he did not go out of the world with any uncharitable feelings towards me, but that at least in his last indisposition (during which from the time that I heard of it I did not cease to pray for him daily & earnestly) he forgave even as he looked to be forgiven. And I hope, if it so please God, that through the merits of our common Redeemer, we shall hereafter meet in another world, where misapprehension, misjudgement & misrepresentation will have no place.

'I will thank you to take an opportunity of communicating this letter to James, as it will save me the trouble of repeating my sentiments on a subject which at present is rather a painful one to dwell on. Give also my love to him, & tell him though I sincerely wish him well, & even rejoice in any good which befalls

himself or his family, yet I feel it would be an indelicacy to offer him under present circumstances my congratulations on the prospective advancement of his family – a feeling, in which if I may judge from his letter to me, he fully participates ...³¹

Contact between Coopers and Austens now dwindles and probably almost ceases. At home in Hamstall Ridware Edward had become well-known as a writer of sermons, and in 1819 had his portrait painted by T. Barber, posed with a roll of sermon notes in his hand; a mezzotint was made from the portrait, so that copies could be circulated amongst his friends and neighbours.³² An episcopal visitation in 1829 confirmed that the church was in good repair, with 230 seats besides about 60 for children and 50 sittings for the poor, and an organist was paid for by Edward. The rectory was a ‘very good commodious house’, which Edward had much improved and enlarged; Edward’s son Henry, living at home with his parents, was his father’s curate, paid £50 p.a. There was a day school for the village children, supported by Edward and the Leigh family, also a Sunday school for 60 children.³³

In June 1830 there is probably the last mention of Edward in the Austen-Leigh archive. After Mr Leigh Perrot’s death in 1817, his wife lived on at her beloved house Scarlets in Wargrave, and her great-nephew James Edward Austen-Leigh cared for her most dutifully as she grew ever older and frailer. While he and his wife were staying with her in the summer of 1830 he wrote this significant letter to his sister Anna Lefroy:

‘We are going to be re-acquainted with an old relation, Mr Cowper; & his Wife & a daughter; Mrs L.P. heard that he was in the neighbourhood, & wrote to ask him to dine here & meet us tomorrow, which he has very *gratefully* accepted; she has since heard that Mrs & Miss Cowper are with him, & has invited them also. I suppose you know that they have been banished people from Scarlets for these 30 years; I am glad that she is inclined at last to forgive the offence, whatever it may have been, & I am really glad of an opportunity of being acquainted with Mr Cowper.’³⁴

James Edward evidently had never been in touch with the Cooper family, as he mis-spells their name, and knows nothing about Edward’s letter of 1817 to Jane and James. Thirty years takes the offence back to 1800 – Edward Cooper must indeed have sent a fatal letter of ‘cruel comfort’ to Mr Leigh Perrot regarding Mrs Leigh Perrot’s trial, which so annoyed his uncle as to result in Edward being omitted from his Will. And however ‘*grateful*’ he may have been to Mrs Leigh Perrot on this occasion in 1830, he and his family were not mentioned in her Will either, when she died in 1836.

Edward died on 26 February 1833, and the *Staffordshire Advertiser* published his obituary in its issue of 2 March: ‘Mr Cooper had for many years been known as a distinguished clergyman, and as the author of nine volumes of practical sermons, which have obtained more extensive circulation, both in this, and foreign countries, than the similar productions of any other author, besides several other valuable works. As an able, pious and exemplary pastor, his loss will be long severely felt by his sorrowing and affectionate people. He was justly revered by



The Revd Edward Cooper: mezzotint by W. Say after T. Barber, 1819

an unusually large circle of friends for his exemplary piety, sound judgement and truly catholic spirit.' He was buried in St Michael's, and a few years afterwards his wife Caroline also; there is a memorial inscription to them both on the east wall of the north aisle, and a family grave plot outside in the churchyard.

Fifty years later, in 1883, the Revd G.J. Davies, of Romsey, Hants, made a collection of sermons written between 1800-1840, and published them, in several volumes, as *Homilies, Ancient and Modern*. Mr Davies included some

of Edward's, and gave him particular praise as 'the affectionate, old-fashioned pastor, speaking to men whom he knew and who knew him, not so much as their priest as their pastor; not so much as the rector of the parish as their friend ...' Edward's last surviving son, Frederick, had told Mr Davies that 'His family, who seem to have been greatly respected and beloved, resided to the time of their death near their native village, and used, one and all, to say there was no place like it. This of itself speaks volumes – people were satisfied with them, and they with the neighbours and the locality.'³⁵

What did Mrs Austen and her daughters do while they were staying at Hamstall Ridware from 14 August until probably 25 September 1806? Unfortunately, as the Austen ladies were travelling together, there are no letters from Jane to Cassandra describing daily events, as there are when the sisters are apart. But here we can return to Mrs Powys's diaries and journals, because obviously whatever entertainment Edward Cooper thought appropriate to arrange for his mother-in-law, would do equally well for his aunt. This is all guesswork – repeat, guesswork – but it would seem entirely likely that the Austens passed their time in similar fashion.

First of all, there would be the purely domestic side of the visit: catching up on family news and admiring the children, and for the young Coopers' benefit Mrs Austen wrote out an account of their Leigh ancestry³⁶ – and each Sunday must have entailed walking to church across the rectory garden to hear Edward preach his latest sermon.

Secondly, there would be walks around Hamstall Ridware and its immediate surroundings, as Mrs Powys recorded: 'In the evening we went a-trout-fishing on the Blythe, a river running at the bottom of a meadow before their house' – and again on another evening, 'but the heat was so intense it was hardly bearable.' There was no river at Steventon, but the Austen ladies might have liked to try their hand at fishing, which was considered a suitable field sport for ladies. The Blythe was safe for swimming as well: 'I walk'd down to the River Blythe by 7 in the morn to see Caroline & ye 3 eldest Children bathe, which they did most mornings, having put up a dressing-house on the Bank ...' As we know that Jane enjoyed sea-bathing at Lyme Regis, she may well have borrowed a costume from Caroline and cooled off here; it would be interesting to know if any trace of the dressing-house survives.

Mrs Powys was indefatigable, noting the local cottage industries: 'Walked up the village to Smith's the weaver, to see the manner of that work, and tis really curious to see with what astonishing velocity they threw the shuttle' – and the beginning of the Industrial Revolution: 'We took a long hot walk to the village of Morrey, to see a tape manufactory, of which seven gentlemen of that neighbourhood are proprietors. The noise of the machinery is hardly to be borne, tho' the workpeople told us they themselves hardly heard the noise – such is use. [Presumably the machinery was powered by a water wheel in the Blythe.] The calendaring part is worth observation, as the tapes all go through the floor of an upper room, and when you go down to the apartment under it, you see them all

coming through the ceiling, perfectly smooth and glossy, where the women take them, and roll them in the pieces as we buy them at the haberdashers, whereas in the upper room they all look tumbled and dirty.' And finally: 'That evening we all walked up to Farmer Cox's, a very fine high situation, and most extensive views; indeed the prospect all round Hamstall is delightful.'³⁷

Thirdly, there must have been a number of dinner parties, with the Coopers as either hosts or guests, for when visitors arrived from another part of the country to enter a small social group, they would provide fresh news and arouse much interest in the neighbourhood. When Jane visited Godmersham in 1813, for example, she wrote to Frank: 'I have not been here these 4 years, so I am sure the event deserves to be talked of before & behind as well as in the middle.'³⁸ The nearest neighbours to the Coopers were of course the Riley family in Hamstall Hall, and apart from the Revd Thomas Gisborne at Yoxall, Edward would have a number of other clerical friends in the immediate vicinity, such as those attached to Lichfield Cathedral, Mr Carey the incumbent of St Nicholas, Abbots Bromley, and Mr Stubbs, incumbent of St Mary's, Uttoxeter. The Coopers would invite these friends in to meet the Austens, and the friends would invite them back the following week or so – hence several parties could happen in five weeks.

And as the Austens visited in the summertime, picnics could also be arranged. Here again, Mrs Powys recorded in 1800 that some neighbours had invited about forty people to join in a picnic in the Forest of Needwood, including the Coopers and herself. They were all requested to meet at the great tree called the Swilcar Oak, famous for its immense size and age. 'Mr and Mrs Bailey had drove early in the morning to the Forest, to see all the dining-tables placed under the shade of the trees; and a most elegant cold collation indeed it was, or at least I may say intended to be so, but we none of us could help laughing with the donors themselves, who told us, in placing the tables in the most shady parts, they had forgotten the sun was drawing on to that spot, as well as their visitors, so that the intense heat of the weather made the hams, tongues, chickens, pies, &c, literally all lukewarm. After our repast the ladies made walking parties to different places in the forest; some of us went to take a more correct view of the great oak, where we met in the morning. ... Tis styled Swilcar Oak, or the Father of the Forest ... tis supposed to be 600 years old, stands singly upon a beautiful lawn surrounded with extensive woods ... When the gentlemen retir'd from the dinner-tables they were placed in a more shady situation for tea and coffee, against the return of the ladies from their walks, after which we again took a very long promenade to view the most picturesque scenes ... we saw Dovedale, and other parts of Derbyshire ...'³⁹

Needwood Forest still exists and has some of the UK's most ancient woodland, though it was drastically reduced in the early nineteenth century to make way for new farms. The Swilcar Oak has gone; it was already dying back and losing its branches when Mrs Powys saw it, but survived for another century or so. It was last measured in 1904, when its girth was over 25 feet; no definite year is recorded for its demise, but presumably it died between 1904 and the late 1960s when Staffordshire was next being surveyed for its ancient trees.⁴⁰



*The Swilcar Oak, Needwood Forest: drawing by Jacob Strutt,
circa 1824*

Fourthly there would also be plenty to do in the way of sightseeing further afield, making day trips within a radius of about ten miles around Hamstall Ridware. All the places referred to below were mentioned by Mrs Powys as being the destinations for family excursions during her several visits to the Coopers between 1800 and 1808, when her diaries end.

Obviously the first trip would be to see Lichfield Cathedral, built of the local red sandstone and with three tall spires nicknamed the Ladies of the Vale, visible for miles around the city. There had been two earlier cathedrals on the same site, first Saxon and second Norman, this third being Gothic and constructed between 1195-1330. It is one of the smallest of the English cathedrals and has been heavily restored, especially in the nineteenth century, but is still very fine. Mrs Powys carefully records all its dimensions, and copies into her journal the account by a contemporary historian of how it was fought over viciously during the Civil War in the 1640s, being wrecked and desecrated by the Parliamentarians before it could be recaptured by the Royalists, and further vandalised prior to the restoration of the monarchy. 'From the Cathedral we went to the Revd Mr Saville's garden, who is a great botanist, and has a large collection of curious plants. We then went a mile and a half from Lichfield to a Mr Glover's, whose paintings are in very high repute more particularly in Landscape, many indeed very fine ones and some pleasing portraits. After walking back to Lichfield, we amused ourselves going from shop to shop, there are a variety of good ones in this city, particularly of the Wedgwood

manufactory.¹⁴¹ As Jane was such a keen supporter of the Stuart monarchy, she would have been delighted to know that the rebuilding of the cathedral started as soon as possible once Cromwell's republican government had collapsed. Mrs Austen and Cassandra, both being keen gardeners, would have enjoyed meeting Mr Saville, and Cassandra in particular, as the artist of the Austen family, would have enjoyed studying Glover's works.



Dr Johnson's House, Lichfield

Apart from the Cathedral, Lichfield had, and still has, the house on the corner of Market Square and Breadmarket Street, where Dr Johnson was born in 1709 and where he spent the first 27 years of his life. In the early nineteenth century the house was used as a grocer's shop, and is now the Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum. As Johnson was one of Jane's favourite authors, she undoubtedly would have wanted to see his house; and in the nearby town of Uttoxeter, there was another site for her to visit – Johnson recalled that, as a boy, he had refused to serve at his father's bookstall in Uttoxeter Market Place, and some fifty years later, about 1780, had come back to the town to stand bare-headed in the rain as a penance for such unfilial behaviour. Boswell's *Life of Johnson* had been published in 1791, so Jane would have known this anecdote.

At Abbots Bromley, did the Austens see the famous Horn Dance? It is held on a Monday early in September, when men from Abbots Bromley, carrying the ancient reindeer horns [antlers] on their shoulders, perform the Horn Dance in the

village and surrounding district. The dance itself combines mumming play and morris dancing – there are twelve men in costume, six carrying the horns and six others accompanying them with music and foolery. No-one knows quite how old the custom is, or its origins; one theory is that the dance symbolises the rites of the chase and establishes the villagers' privilege of hunting in Needwood Forest; another is that it celebrates St Bartholomew's Day.

The medieval Blithfield Hall, two miles from Abbots Bromley, has for 750 years been the home of the Bagot family, and on the estate is their famous herd of Bagot Goats, odd-looking black and white creatures with large curving horns. It is believed that they were brought into England from the Continent centuries ago, and they are certainly one of the oldest breed of goats in Britain today. Blithfield Hall is one of the places where the Horn Dance troupe has always stopped to perform. Mrs Powys noted: 'We dined at Mr Carey's, minister of Abbot's Bromley. Before dinner we went to see Lord Bagot's park. The number and size of the oaks here are quite astonishing; nor had any of us the least idea to what a size oaks would grow. His Lordship has been offered for them an hundred thousand pounds.'⁴²

Beautesert, near Longdon Staffs. Mrs Powys: 'We went to see Beau Desert, [belonging to] the Earl of Uxbridge, a large old white house, situated on a vast eminence, commanding a most beautiful prospect. Tis a great pity that now none of the family reside there; tis now almost unfurnished, and looks desolate.'⁴³ Beautesert no longer exists; the house Mrs Powys saw had originally been a small monastic building, which was remodelled in 1569 and again by the 9th Baron Paget in 1771 to incorporate many neo-Gothic features. It suffered a bad fire in 1909 and was renovated thereafter, but the Paget family could not afford its upkeep and moved permanently to their other house, Plas Newydd, at Anglesey in North Wales. Beautesert was finally demolished in 1935; the grounds have become a campsite and golf-course, with a few ruins of the house still visible.

Shuck- or Shugborough, Milford, near Stafford. Mrs Powys: 'We all set out early in the morn to see Shuckborough, Mr Anson's ... a remarkable good house, finely furnished, and lately enlarged. There are numbers of valuable statues, busts, etc. Mrs Anson ... is one of the most capital painters, and excels in every kind of drawing. Every room is ornamented with some of her performances. Three of their children, full-length portraits, at the upper end of a large room, is I think equal to any artist – also several copies from Titian and other famed masters.'⁴⁴ The Shugborough estate had originally been quite modest, but the Ansons had become wealthy thanks to the naval successes of Admiral George Anson during the eighteenth century, and in consequence his heirs had been able to enlarge and rebuild the house and acquire many acres of the surrounding countryside. Shugborough is now owned by the National Trust and administered by Staffordshire County Council. The contents of the eighteenth-century mansion include ceramics, paintings, silver and French furniture, and the house is set in a 900-acre estate that has a walled garden, terraces, fine ancient oak trees and a lake; the original Georgian farm is still kept as a working model.



Shugborough

Tutbury Castle, just outside the town of Tutbury. Mrs Powys: ‘We walkd up to the fine old ruin of the castle, where Mary Queen of Scots had formerly been a prisoner. The views from thence are remarkably picturesque.’⁴⁵ Very little remains of the castle today, only the ruins of the south tower with a staircase and two rooms, and some domestic quarters of a later date which are open to the public. The castle occupied a commanding hilltop position on the border of Staffordshire and Derbyshire; but it was already in poor condition in the sixteenth century – badly maintained, draughty, cold, and smelly from a nearby marsh – and Mary Queen of Scots found it the most hateful of all her prisons in England. As Mary Queen of Scots was Jane’s heroine in ‘The History of England’, a visit to see the place of her imprisonment would have been imperative.

Some people like to think the Austens must have visited Chatsworth during this time at Hamstall Ridware, arguing that the mansion is only about 40 miles away and therefore easily accessible.⁴⁶ But this is subconsciously reckoning on the time it would take a modern car to drive there; in 1806, a distance of 40 miles would be the best part of a day’s journey by horse-drawn carriage; hence to make such a trip would mean one day to go, a second to see round the huge mansion, and a third day to return home to Hamstall. In view of the fact that the Cooper children were all falling ill during these weeks in August and September, and as Edward and Caroline were undoubtedly fond parents, it would seem very unlikely that they would be prepared to leave their ailing offspring to the care merely of servants for a period of as much as three days.

It must be emphasised that there is no documentary evidence whatsoever that Jane herself visited any of the places mentioned by Mrs Powys in her diaries, but it would certainly have been possible for her to do so during this five-week period at Hamstall Ridware; and, as noted above, all of them would have something to offer of special interest for the Austen ladies.

Notes

- 1 *Jane Austen’s Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye (OUP, 1995, 1997), p. 283.
- 2 Le Faye, Deirdre: *Jane Austen: A Family Record* (2nd edn, CUP, 2004), pp. 47-49.
- 3 *FR*, p. 52.
- 4 *FR*, pp. 66-67.

- 5 Climenson, Mrs Emily J.: *Passages from the Diaries of Mrs Philip Lybbe Powys of Hardwick House, Oxon, AD 1756 to 1808* (London, 1899), pp. 240, 248, 252-53. Unfortunately Climenson's editing was extremely unreliable, and in many cases for accurate information it is necessary to return to Mrs Powys's original ms journals, some of which are in the British Library, now BL.Add.Mss 42,160– 42,173.
- 6 *FR*, pp. 76-77; also Powys pp. 254-75 and Add.Ms 42,170.
- 7 Powys, pp. 276, 280, and Add.Ms 42,161.
- 8 *Letters*, p. 3.
- 9 Powys, p. 296 and Add.Ms 42,161.
- 10 Powys, p. 309.
- 11 *Letters*, p. 37.
- 12 Powys, p. 323 and Add.Ms 42,161.
- 13 Powys, p. 330 and Add.Ms 42,161.
- 14 Powys, pp. 333-34 and Add.Ms 42,171.
- 15 Revd Stebbing Shaw: *The History and Antiquities of Staffordshire* (London, 1798-1801, facsimile reprint Wakefield 1976), pp. 156-60.
- 16 Ridware History Society website.
- 17 *Letters*, pp. 76, 78.
- 18 *FR*, p. 153.
- 19 *Letters*, p. 138.
- 20 Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Stratford-on-Avon, Stoneleigh archive DR18/17/32/53.
- 21 R.A. Austen-Leigh, *Austen Papers 1704-1856* (privately printed 1942), p. 247.
- 22 Stoneleigh archive DR18/17/32/150.
- 23 *Letters*, p. 115.
- 24 Powys, p. 365 and Add.Ms 42,162.
- 25 *Letters*, p. 148.
- 26 *P&P* , III/6, or chapter 48 in continuous numbering.
- 27 *Letters*, p. 112.
- 28 *Letters*, p. 172.
- 29 *Letters*, p. 167.
- 30 *Letters*, p. 322.
- 31 *Austen Papers*, pp. 253-54; 'From a copy preserved by the Cooper family'.
- 32 Mezzotint by W. Say from the Barber portrait, 1819. A copy of the mezzotint is in the National Portrait Gallery, and the original portrait is presently in Hamstall Ridware church.
- 33 D.B. Robinson, ed: *Collections for a History of Staffordshire*, 4th Series, vol. 10: Visitations of the Archdeaconry of Stafford, 1829-1841.
- 34 Hampshire Record Office, Winchester: Austen-Leigh archive, 23M93/84/1.
- 35 Revd G.J. Davies: *Homilies, Ancient and Modern* (London 1883); I, pp. vi-vii; III, pp. vi-xi.
- 36 Lefroy Ms; Mrs Austen's pedigree notes were kept by one of Edward's sons, who sent a copy back to Anna Lefroy many years later for inclusion in her book on family history.
- 37 Powys, pp. 333-44 and Add.Mss 42,161 and 42,171.

- 38 *Letters*, p. 229.
39 Powys, pp. 336-38.
40 Personal communication from The Woodland Trust, 2008.
41 Powys, pp. 340-43 and Add.Ms 42,171; *Letters* no 76(C), p. 195.
42 Powys, pp. 354-55.
43 Powys, pp. 338-39.
44 Powys, pp. 353-54.
45 Donald Greene, in JASNA *Persuasions* no. 7, 1985, pp. 58-61, and *Persuasions* no. 8, 1986, pp. 56-57.

*Practical Sermons And A Penitential Hymn:
Edward Cooper, Rector of Hamstall Ridware*

Irene Collins

We are told that Samuel Johnson once heard a lady preach in St Paul's Cathedral, and that when someone asked him if he had been surprised he replied that he was not at all surprised to find that she had done it very well. What did surprise him was that she had done it at all. This morning the old man will be able to rest in peace, for although by kind permission of the Rector I am standing in the pulpit, I shall not be preaching a sermon. My assignment in the programme is to describe the sort of sermons preached here and published in many volumes by Jane Austen's Evangelical cousin, the Revd Edward Cooper, when he was rector here from 1800 until his death in 1833.

Nowadays we tend to dismiss as evangelical anyone who advertises their religion to the embarrassment of others. Jane Austen would have shared their embarrassment – witness her account of Mr Collins's conversation at the Netherfield ball. But this does not entirely explain a remark she made in a letter to Cassandra at the beginning of 1809, 'I do not like the Evangelicals'; *the Evangelicals*, which suggests that she was referring to a specific set of individuals.¹ So who were they, and why did she particularly dislike them?

Their name was derived from the word *evangel*, the good news: specifically the 'glad tidings of great joy' which the angel announced to the shepherds at Bethlehem, that unto us was born 'a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord'. The four men who first wrote the story of Jesus's life on earth, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, are known as the Evangelists, the bearers of good news. After the Reformation, Protestants liked to think that they in their turn were bearers of good news, and hence referred to themselves as *evangelical* (or 'like the Evangelists'). In time, however, the meaning of the term was honed down by theologians until

it applied only to people who accepted a particular version of the good news – a version which Edward Cooper preached throughout his ministry in this church. In outline it ran as follows:

At the beginning of time, human beings were born with freedom to choose between good and evil. Unfortunately, Adam, in the Garden of Eden, famously, chose evil, and this Original Sin by our first ancestor permanently warped our nature, so that although we still have freedom to choose between good and evil, we also have an inherent tendency to choose evil – a kind of gravitational pull down the slippery slope. To use Edward Cooper's dramatic terms: 'The blood is tainted; the very vitals are corrupt.'² Hence as we go through life we become so overburdened by sin that we are teetering on the edge of eternal damnation. In this dire situation it is useless to protest that we were baptised as Christians, that we go to church, that we receive Holy Communion. Our only hope of salvation is to undergo a conversion to 'true religion' – a process which involves searching our souls until we are so fully conscious of our sinfulness that we appeal desperately to God to allow us a share (or 'interest' as Cooper called it) in the redemption won for mankind by Christ's death upon the Cross. If we do this earnestly enough, and with complete faith in Christ's redeeming love, we shall eventually be assured that He has entered our lives. 'Blessed assurance! Jesus is mine!' as the American hymn writer Jane van Alstyne was to exclaim. From this moment we shall be regenerated, born again, given a chance to make a new start; and this time, instead of being biased towards evil, we shall be sanctified by the Holy Spirit, which will help us to resist temptation and point us towards the paths of righteousness leading to heavenly bliss.

By the beginning of the 18th century most of the Nonconformist churches had accepted this doctrine to some degree. The Church of England, however, would have none of it. In the church's view, 'conversion', as understood by the Evangelicals, was not only unnecessary but undesirable, since it encouraged people to think that they were already 'saved' and had no need to fear God's final judgement. Congregations were likely to be divided between those who were 'saved' and those who were afraid they could never be sure. Most of the members of the Church of England have continued to this day to believe that the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion, as defined at the Reformation, are sufficient to enrol recipients as Christians and help them to lead Christian lives.

Jane Austen's generation of orthodox Anglicans could not, however, have known that their cherished beliefs would be so safely guarded, and unless they were of a placid and trusting disposition like Jane's sister Cassandra they tended to be on the defensive against the Evangelicals. If the stropky attitude Jane adopted towards her cousin Edward seems at times to be a little ungracious, we should perhaps remember that there were two attempts by Evangelicals during her lifetime to bring about a change of attitude in the church. John Wesley hoped to do so by converting large numbers of ordinary people. During fifty years of itinerant preaching he achieved considerable success, but was defeated in his ultimate aim by the hostility of bishops and clergy who refused to minister to his converts.

His defeat, however, was bought at a price, for in 1795, just four years after his death, 40,000 of his followers seceded from the Church of England to form a separate Methodist connexion. In *Mansfield Park*, Jane Austen reminds us of the power of Methodist preaching, which continued to draw members away from the Church for many years to come. She was more fully aware, however, of a second campaign, led by William Wilberforce. Unlike Wesley, Wilberforce was both a politician and a man of immense wealth, and on both accounts his instinct was to start at the top. From the moment of his conversion in 1785 he assiduously (some people said shamelessly) courted the favour of wealthy individuals who would pay for the education of Evangelical clergy, bishops who would ordain them, and patrons who would give them parishes; and, if some of these sponsors were more willing to offer money and influence than to search their souls, he was willing to 'accommodate' them for the sake of the greater good. These tactics made Evangelicalism more popular with young men seeking a career in the Church than it might otherwise have been, and by the end of the century Wilberforce had built up a sizable minority of clergy within the Church of England. It was these men, along with their prominent lay supporters such as the writer Hannah More, that Jane Austen referred to as the Evangelicals.

At what point Edward Cooper was converted to the cause is not clear. According to his sermons he did not believe that conversion had of necessity to be a sudden, shattering moment of comprehension like St Paul's on the way to Damascus, and if his own experience was more reasoned, his arrival at Hamstall-Ridware towards the end of 1799 could well have been the key event. Like all movements of thought, Evangelicalism took off more readily in some areas than in others, and in Staffordshire the climate seems to have been exceptionally favourable. The Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry had been one of Wilberforce's earliest recruits. The Earl of Harrowby, the largest landowner in the county, was also on board. Around Hamstall itself there was a nest of Evangelical clergy, and above all there was the Revd Thomas Gisborne living at nearby Yoxall Hall, his family home. Gisborne was a very persuasive writer: even Jane Austen had to admit that she admired his book on *The Duties of the Female Sex*, though she had been reluctant to read it when Cassandra recommended it.³ He was an important figure in the Evangelical movement, not least because he was a personal friend of Wilberforce, who was in the habit of spending several weeks at Yoxall Lodge during parliamentary vacations. Edward Cooper was soon a frequent visitor at the Lodge also, and by 1802 was on close enough terms with Gisborne to name his newborn son after him. In 1809 he was to dedicate what became his most successful collection of sermons to the Revd Thomas Gisborne.

Edward's talents as a preacher were soon recognised by his fellow clergy, who began urging him to publish his sermons.⁴ He took readily to an idea which would enable him to fulfil his obligation as an Evangelical to preach the gospel far and wide and at the same time, if he was lucky, bring in a little extra money whilst his six (soon to be seven, then eight) young children were growing up. Sermons often sold well at this time, with most clergymen preferring to read from a published

text rather than prepare their own material Sunday after Sunday; and Evangelical sermons were particularly sought after, because however strange their doctrine may seem to the orthodox they were at least about religion. Most other writers stuck to morality.

It was often said of the Evangelicals at the time that they produced only one sermon between them and that it was based on the three Rs – Man’s Ruin, Man’s Redemption and Man’s Regeneration. This was not quite true of Edward Cooper, who preached several sermons in aid of missionary societies, stressing the need both to rescue Catholics from Popish superstition and to save benighted natives overseas from the worship of pagan gods. ‘Reflect what it is to save a soul’ was his urgent injunction on these occasions:⁵ like Mrs Proudie he was very fond of saving souls.

The three Rs, however, may be said to give a fair enough impression of his two major works. Jane Austen received a copy of the first of these in 1804, despatched by the proud author himself as soon as it was published. It consisted of a series of sermons designed, according to the title, to ‘elucidate’ key passages in the Gospel. In fact their purpose seems to have been to overwhelm the reader with Biblical evidence in support of Evangelical doctrine. Edward Cooper was no mean Biblical scholar, but the Austen ladies were not impressed. They must have made this clear to the author, for when sending Jane his next selection in 1809 he assured her that they would like these better.⁶ On the strength of this she was prepared to give them a go. They were entitled *Practical and Familiar Sermons*, and Edward told her that they would be suitable for country congregations. ‘They are professedly *practical*’ she wrote cautiously to Cassandra. But if she was expecting simple advice for the daily routine she must have been disabused when she saw the list of titles to the sermons: ‘The Brazen Serpent’, ‘The Unfruitfulness of Sin’, ‘The Present time the most Convenient Season for Repentance’, ‘The Danger of *Conviction* when not followed by Conversion’, ‘The Blessedness of the Ransomed’, etc. These heralded hard doctrine. Perhaps if she had read the many definitions of the word ‘Practical’ in the 1805 edition of Dr Johnson’s Dictionary she would have known better what to expect, for it seems that religious writers regarded Bible study, such as Cooper’s Gospel series, as ‘speculative’, whereas doctrine was ‘practical’ because it gives us the rules on which to base our conduct.

By describing the sermons as *Familiar* Cooper apparently meant not only that they were suitable for family use but that they would be easy to understand. He had borne in mind, he said in the preface, the *illiterate* members of the congregation (who in any country parish must have formed the majority). He had not tried, he said, to make every word intelligible, which would have been impossible, but he hoped that the basic message would be clear. In this he must surely have been successful. The sermons were short by the standard of the times – half an hour or so, rather than the usual hour to an hour and a half. The sentences too were comparatively short, and peppered with phrases from the King James Bible which listeners would have known since childhood. There were occasional flashes of rhetoric, as in the sudden command, ‘Come, thou drunkard! Stand forth and say in

the face of this congregation whether thou findest the ways of drunkenness the ways of pleasantness and peace!’ On the whole, however, it was the efficient structure of the argument that was relied upon to keep listeners alert. Each sermon dealt with a single aspect of the Evangelical doctrine – sin, redemption, sanctification, etc. The format was always the same: first a text, usually from the Bible, followed by three or sometimes four sections of exposition. The sections were numbered audibly firstly, secondly, thirdly, as the preacher came to them, so that when the congregation was used to him there would be no difficulty in realising what point he had reached (and how much longer he was likely to go on). Each section made just one point, which was repeated over and over and over again; yet among the apparent repetitions there were subtle differences of emphasis and meaning which perceptive hearers may well have picked up. The sermons were admired by connoisseurs of the art of preaching almost to the end of the 19th century, and Jane Austen’s nephew, writing a memoir of his aunt in 1869, had some justification for recalling the renown achieved by her cousin Edward Cooper.⁷

His sermons were certainly popular in their day. *The Practical and Familiar Sermons* ran to fifteen editions in the author’s lifetime. But fashions fade and popularity is fickle. Evangelicalism of the extreme variety preached by Edward Cooper had more or less died out of its own accord in the Church of England by 1830, and the Evangelicals’ hope of bringing about a great spiritual revival passed to the Oxford Movement, as even Wilberforce realised. Meanwhile, during the long wars against France, the Church of England itself began to see the need for Christians to be more open about their religion, provided they could do so without giving offence. In this less aggressive atmosphere even Jane Austen could write to her niece Fanny in 1814, ‘I am by no means convinced that we ought not all to be Evangelicals’.⁸

Here in his own parish Edward Cooper continues to be remembered not only as a renowned preacher but as a kind and conscientious parish priest, and (contrary to Jane Austen’s view of him) as a convivial neighbour who made many friends.⁹ Elsewhere, if he is known at all, it is simply as the cousin whose opinions and demeanour Jane Austen disliked. An achievement for which he is seldom given the credit he deserves is the part he played in promoting hymn singing in the Church of England and hence in the nation at large.¹⁰ Hymns are now part of England’s heritage, cherished by believers and unbelievers alike. It is taken for granted that hymns are sung at church services, and it is hard to believe that if Jane Austen ever sang a hymn in her life it could only have been during the five weeks that she stayed here in Hamstall Ridware in 1806. Hymns were frowned upon in the Church of England on the grounds that unlike metrical psalms, which were paraphrases from the biblical Book of Psalms, hymns were expressions of human thought, and nobody could be sure whether they were inspired by God or the devil. The Evangelicals, however, had learnt the value of hymn-singing from the Methodists, and Edward Cooper had not been long in Hamstall when he joined other Evangelical clergy in the neighbourhood in producing a small book of hymns and psalms for use in their own churches. It contained two hymns he had

written himself. One of these, thanking God for the blessings of the Sabbath, was a contribution towards an Evangelical campaign to enforce the strict observance of Sunday, the like of which had not been seen in England since Puritan times; the other, a penitential hymn asking God for forgiveness of sins, was based on the Litany, a passage in the Book of Common Prayer which probably appealed to Cooper by its frequent repetition of the same phrases. They were to appear again in a compilation which was to play a decisive part in promoting hymn-singing in the Church of England. In 1810 Edward Cooper was called upon to assist his colleague Thomas Cotterill, Minister at Lane End Chapel, in producing a larger hymn book which might hopefully have a wider appeal. The ensuing *Selection of Psalms and Hymns for Public and Private Use* was soon expanded to include over three hundred hymns and by 1819 had reached its eighth edition when disaster loomed. Cotterill had by then moved from Staffordshire to become Vicar of St Paul's, Sheffield, where a group of diehards dug up an ancient law banning the singing of hymns in church services, and in 1820 secured an order against Cotterill's book in the Consistory Court at York. Fortunately the Archbishop of York, afraid of driving the Evangelicals away from the Church, not only secured the abolition of the old law but paid for a modified version of Cotterill's book to be published with his blessing. 'The Archbishop's Selection', as it came to be known, proved to be immensely popular with orthodox clergy who had seen too many members of their congregation joining the Methodists in order to sing hymns. New hymn books began springing up like mushrooms as clergymen everywhere produced their own 'selection'. Eventually, to stem the tide and exercise control over what could be sung, the church authorities decided in 1861 to produce one officially authorised hymn book, the famous *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, for use throughout the land. And there, among hundreds of hymns by celebrated authors and from more than a thousand years of Christian history was Edward Cooper's penitential hymn, 'Father of Heav'n, whose love profound / A ransom for our souls hath found'. It now appears in every standard hymn book in the country, Anglican and Nonconformist alike.

Notes

- 1 Deirdre Le Faye ed., *Jane Austen's Letters* (3rd edn, Oxford, 1995), No. 66, p. 170. The remark was occasioned by a letter from Cassandra recommending Hannah More's recently published novel, *Coelebs in Search of a Wife*.
- 2 Edward Cooper, *Sermons chiefly designed to elucidate some of the leading doctrines of the Gospel* (2 edn, 3 vols. London, 1805), vol I. p. 86
- 3 *Letters*, op. cit., No. 47, p. 112.
- 4 Edward Cooper, *A Sermon preached in the parish church at Walsall at the Archdeacon's Visitation, August 12th, 1802* (London, 1802).
- 5 Edward Cooper, *Two sermons preached in the Old and New Churches at Wolverhampton preparatory to the establishment of a Bible Institution* (London, 1816) p. 25.
- 6 *Letters*, op. cit., No. 65, p. 167.

- 7 J.E. Austen-Leigh, *A Memoir of Jane Austen* (1871) p. 27.
The third volume of G.-J. Davies, *Homilies Ancient and Modern* (London, 1883) is devoted to sermons by Edward Cooper, and Davies wrote admiringly of Cooper's technique in *Successful Preachers: Biographical Sketches* (London, 1884) pp. 265-75.
- 8 *Letters*, op. cit., No. 109, p. 280.
- 9 Gaye King, 'Edward Cooper's Domain', *Transactions* (Jane Austen Society Midlands, No. 10, 1999), pp. 4-16.
- 10 For this topic see Ian Bradley, *Abide With Me: the World of Victorian Hymns* (London, 1997), chs 1-3; and John Julian, *A Dictionary of Hymnody* (first published London 1892, revised edn, London 1915), entries on 'Staffordshire Hymn Books', 'Cotterill, Thomas', 'Father of Heaven, whose love profound' and 'England Hymnody, Church of'.

Emma, Mr Elton and Johnson's Varlet Poet

David Selwyn

Jane Austen makes various references to Shakespeare in her novels: he is alluded to, he is quoted, characters read him; and of course we know from her letters that she herself went to see him in the theatre. Henry Crawford is certainly speaking for her as well as for himself when he says that Shakespeare 'is a part of an Englishman's constitution'.¹ In *Mansfield Park*, the approach to Shakespeare's plays is, unsurprisingly perhaps, a theatrical one. Although Edmund refers to 'celebrated passages' being 'quoted by every body' and being found in 'half the books we open', what we remember is the dramatic nature of Crawford's reading aloud from *Henry VIII*, in which Fanny finds 'a variety of excellence beyond what she had ever met with'.² As he takes on the roles of the different characters – the King, Queen Catherine, Wolsey, Cromwell – she relives the pleasure that his acting had given her during the rehearsals of *Lovers' Vows*, and though she feels very differently about him now from the way she did then, her attention is progressively fixed on him in spite of herself.

There is no doubt that Jane Austen regarded Shakespeare as something to be experienced at its fullest in the form of the spoken – or acted – word (as she also felt about novels, which were regularly read aloud at Steventon and Chawton). There is a remark in *Emma*, however, that indicates that she could sometimes take an alternative, and more purely literary, approach. When the presentation of Mr Elton's charade leads Emma into an exultant bout of self-congratulation on the success of her matchmaking, she excitedly reflects on the extraordinary manner in which 'what is so evidently, so palpably desirable ...

THE
PLAYS
OF
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE,
IN EIGHT VOLUMES,
WITH THE
CORRECTIONS and ILLUSTRATIONS
OF
Various COMMENTATORS;
To which are added
NOTES by SAM. JOHNSON.

L O N D O N :
Printed for J. and R. TONSON, C. CORBET, H. WOODFALL,
J. RIVINGTON, R. BALDWIN, L. HAWES, CLARK and
COLLINS, W. JOHNSTON, T. CASLON, T. LOWNDS,
and the Executors of B. DODD.
M,DCC,LXV.

Title page of Johnson's edition of Shakespeare

should so immediately shape itself into the proper form.’³ ‘There does seem to be a something in the air of Hartfield,’ she tells Harriet, ‘which gives love exactly the right direction, and sends it into the very channel where it ought to flow.’ And quoting *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, she adds:

The course of true love never did run smooth –

A Hartfield edition of Shakespeare would have a long note on that passage.

Harriet, who hasn't the faintest idea of what Emma is talking about, fails to take up the reference, her mind being entirely occupied with Mr Elton: ‘That Mr.

Elton should really be in love with me, – me, of all people, who did not know him, to speak to him, at Michaelmas!’ And we fail to take up the irony, since we are not yet in a position to know that Shakespeare is wiser than Emma, and that in this novel the course of true love is going to run very far from smooth. But we probably fail to take up something else as well. Emma speaks of a ‘Hartfield edition’ of Shakespeare, with a ‘long note’ on the passage. Now leaving aside the fact that given what Mr Knightley says about her literary studies she probably would not read it, she – or at least Jane Austen – is thinking of Shakespeare here not as being performed in the theatre, or even as being read aloud, but as existing on the printed page, as a text, with a full complement of commentary and critical apparatus; and the casual jocularly of the term ‘a Hartfield edition’ suggests that it is natural to assume that any volume of Shakespeare would be likely to be in some sort of edition, rather than existing as merely the bare play itself.

Such in fact would almost certainly have been the case. Readers of Jane Austen’s day were no longer content with the plain and physically unwieldy folios in which Shakespeare had been printed during the seventeenth century, and following the appearance of Nicholas Rowe’s collated and annotated octavo edition in 1709 (which was prefaced by the first formal life), no fewer than eight editors brought out their own versions of the complete works, before the First Variorum of 1803. Where there were uncertainties or confusions in the Quartos and Folios, they offered emendations, sometimes necessarily of a conjectural nature; and they also provided commentaries on the meaning or interpretation of the speeches. Some were more successful than others. Pope, the second editor of Shakespeare, brought out his edition in 1725, but its deficiencies prompted Lewis Theobald, a Grub Street hack and assistant producer of pantomimes at Drury Lane, to issue the following year a book to which he rashly gave the title *Shakespeare Restored, or a Specimen of the many Errors as well Committed as Unamended by Mr Pope in his late edition of this Poet; designed not only to correct the said Edition, but to restore the true Reading of Shakespeare in all the Editions ever published*. This was unwise of him. Pope responded by making him, as ‘Tibbald’, the hero of his mock epic *The Dunciad*; furthermore, in the second edition of his Shakespeare he wrote, ‘Since the publication of *our* first edition, there having been some attempts upon Shakespeare, published by Lewis Theobald ... *we* have inserted, in this impression, as many of ’em as are judg’d of any the least advantage to the poet; the whole amounting to about *twenty-five words*’. In fact he included many more, and Theobald’s own edition, published in 1733, was a very scholarly piece of work, and many of his emendations are still generally accepted. In 1765, Dr Johnson brought out his edition of Shakespeare’s plays, which it had taken him twenty years to produce from his original proposals for it (owing to indolence, according to Boswell). The text was largely based on that of another editor, William Warburton, and the editorial work was rather skimpy, but the *Preface* remains one of his great pieces of writing and affords insights that are still as revealing about Shakespeare as they are about Johnson himself.

A 'Hartfield edition', then, would belong to this sequence of scholarly and handsomely produced Shakespearean volumes, and Emma would take her place in the series of 18th-century commentators, with Johnson perhaps as her closest model. For what Johnson found above all in Shakespeare was naturalness, and in his criticism he notices continually the way in which a character's words reflect life as it is experienced by real people. 'Shakespeare has no heroes,' he writes in the *Preface*:

his scenes are occupied only by men, who act and speak as the reader thinks that he should himself have spoken or acted on the same occasion: Even where the agency is supernatural the dialogue is level with life. Other writers disguise the most natural passions and most frequent incidents; so that he who contemplates them in the book will not know them in the world: Shakespeare approximates the remote, and familiarizes the wonderful; the event which he represents will not happen, but if it were possible, its effects would probably be such as he has assigned; and it may be said, that he has not only shewn human nature as it acts in real exigencies, but as it would be found in trials, to which it cannot be exposed.⁵

It is to this test of truthfulness to life that Emma would put the line 'The course of true love never did run smooth', and like Johnson when sometimes he finds cause to disagree with Shakespeare, she would make her own commentary, in which Shakespeare's generalisation would have to submit to the view of love which she has chosen to take, at least 'in the air of Hartfield'. As a textual commentator, in fact, she would be just as subjective as she will later be as an 'imaginist', or constructor of fiction, when from conceiving of herself as an editor of the play she will have progressed to playing Puck.

Emma's reading of the line would not of course do for Johnson, since her 'long note' would go wilfully and deliberately not just against the sense that Shakespeare clearly means to convey but also against the reasonable experience of the world as we normally find it. He would probably wish to supply a long note of his own on Emma herself at this moment, pointing out that her conception of true love running smooth is not so much that it expedites matters for the two people concerned as that it concurs with the course that she has determined for it. Imagination, with her, is not merely a matter of fancying the way things are, but the way they might be, and then taking actions to bring it about. Johnson has quite a bit to say about fancy. In *Rasselas*, a copy of which we know Jane Austen owned,⁶ the prince encounters a sage who discourses 'with great energy on the government of the passions'; and his description of the effects of the exercise of an uncontrolled imagination fits perfectly with the consequences of Emma's romantic inventions:

He showed, with great strength of sentiment, and variety of illustration, that human nature is degraded and debased, when the lower faculties predominate over the higher; that when fancy, the parent of passion, usurps the domination of the mind, nothing ensues but the natural effect of unlawful government, perturbation and confusion; that she betrays the fortresses of the intellect

to rebels, and excites her children to sedition against reason their lawful sovereign.⁷

It is precisely this process of allowing her imagination to dominate her good sense that Mr Knightley criticises when he tells Mrs Weston that Emma ‘will never submit to anything requiring industry and patience, and a subjection of the fancy to the understanding.’⁸ It is not of course that Emma is lacking in understanding; quite the contrary: her sharp intelligence stands out conspicuously in comparison with her father and sister. But Johnson perceived that a strong intellectual force brings dangers of its own. In an essay in *The Rambler* he wrote:

The general error of those who possess powerful and elevated understanding, is, that they form schemes of too great extent, and flatter themselves too hastily with success; they feel their own force to be great, and, by the complacency with which every man surveys himself, imagine it still greater: they therefore look out for undertakings worthy of their abilities, and engage in them with very little precaution, for they imagine that, without premeditated measures, they shall be able to find expedients in all difficulties.⁹

Johnson is thinking of men engaged in public entrepreneurial or political pursuits, but in the more limited sphere of action in which the women about whom Jane Austen wrote could exercise their powers, what he says is equally true. Furthermore, he recognises that the optimism with which we rashly pursue schemes whose outcome we will not allow to be doubtful is common to us all. ‘We naturally indulge those ideas that please us,’ he wrote elsewhere. ‘Hope will predominate in every mind, till it has been suppressed by frequent disappointments.’¹⁰ How significant the word ‘frequent’ is for Emma; she might have learnt by her first disappointment, that of Mr Elton, that her schemes for Harriet were misguided, but it takes several more finally to suppress the hope that she can order other people’s lives for them.

Emma’s predicament at the beginning of the novel is in some ways not unlike that of Rasselas; in fact Johnson’s novel might almost be addressed to Jane Austen’s heroine, since the readers invoked in the very first sentence are those ‘who listen with credulity to the whispers of fancy, and pursue with eagerness the phantoms of hope’.¹¹ The prince of Abissinia, like all the sons and daughters of the emperor, lives in the ‘happy valley’, which, ‘wide and fruitful, supplied its inhabitants with the necessities of life’:

Here the sons and daughters of Abissinia lived only to know the soft vicissitudes of pleasure and repose, attended by all that were skilful to delight, and gratified with whatever the senses can enjoy. They wandered in gardens of fragrance, and slept in the fortresses of security. Every art was practised to make them pleased with their own condition....

To heighten their opinion of their own felicity, they were daily entertained with songs, the subject of which was the *happy valley*. Their appetites were excited by frequent enumerations of different enjoyments, and revelry and merriment was the business of every hour from the dawn of morning to the close of even.¹²

Rasselas might equally be said to seem 'to unite some of the best blessings of existence' and to have 'very little to distress or vex' him.¹³ But his problem is the same as Emma's.

Knowing only 'the soft vicissitudes of pleasure and repose' (Johnson himself defines 'vicissitude' as 'return of the same things in the same succession'), he finds 'one day and one hour exactly like another, except that the latter is still more tedious than the former';¹⁴ and he longs to escape into the outside world, where he could undergo new experiences and intervene to alleviate the sufferings of others:

His chief amusement was to picture to himself that world which he had never seen; to place himself in various conditions; to be entangled in imaginary difficulties, and to be engaged in wild adventures: but his benevolence always terminated in projects in the relief of distress, the detection of fraud, the defeat of oppression, and the diffusion of happiness.¹⁵

Rasselas is quite sincere in his wish to do good, and though there is little fraud to detect or oppression to defeat in Highbury, Emma lays claim to a similar altruism in her match-making: 'Poor Mr. Elton,' she exclaims on the evening of Miss Taylor's marriage to Mr Weston. 'I thought when he was joining their hands to-day, he looked so very much as if he would like to have the same kind office done for him! I think very well of Mr. Elton, and this is the only way I have of doing him a service.'¹⁶ But like Imlac, the mentor of Rasselas who is always on hand to provide a corrective to his pupil's blithe optimism, Mr Knightley seeks to bring reason to bear on Emma's well-intentioned scheming: 'Invite him to dinner,' he says, 'and help him to the best of the fish and the chicken, but leave him to chuse his own wife. Depend upon it, a man of six or seven-and-twenty can take care of himself.'¹⁷

Emma quite openly describes match-making as 'the greatest amusement in the world'.¹⁸ The phrase, applied to such perilous interference in other people's lives, sounds heartless, but it is not meant to be; thoughtless, perhaps – but, having been given an idea of what the long evenings alone with her father after Miss Taylor's departure will mean to her, we recognise that her indulgence in it arises from the lack of alternative active employments for her mind. Imlac describes Emma's condition exactly:

To indulge the power of fiction, and send imagination out upon the wing, is often the sport of those who delight too much in silent speculation. When we are alone we are not always busy; the labour of excogitation is too violent to last long; the ardour of inquiry will sometimes give way to idleness or satiety. He who has nothing external that can divert him, must find pleasure in his own thoughts, and must conceive himself what he is not; for who is pleased with what he is? He then expatiates in boundless futurity, and culls from all imaginable conditions that which for the present moment he should most desire, amuses his desires with impossible enjoyments, and confers upon his pride unattainable dominion. The mind dances from scene to scene, unites all pleasures in all combinations, and riots in delights which nature and fortune, with all their bounty, cannot bestow.

In time some particular train of ideas fixes the attention, all other intellectual gratifications are rejected, the mind, in weariness or leisure, recurs constantly to the favourite conception, and feasts on the luscious falsehood whenever she is offended with the bitterness of truth. By degrees the reign of fancy is confirmed; she grows first imperious, and in time despotick. Then fictions begin to operate as realities, false opinions fasten upon the mind, and life passes in dreams of rapture or of anguish.¹⁹

Johnson devotes three chapters of *Rasselas* to a debate concerning the nature and desirability of marriage. This is not of course a theme that would find any place in the kind of novel that Jane Austen writes, where marriage is a *donnée*, a device to restore social harmony and bring the plot to its conclusion. But Johnson is not writing such a novel: nobody gets married at the end – indeed the ending itself is avowedly inconclusive; and marriage is one of the experiences that the hero considers as he tries to discover the means by which he can make his ‘*choice of life*’. The prince, taking as ever the optimistic view of life, asserts that marriage ‘is evidently the dictate of nature’, and that, since ‘men and women were made to be companions of each other’, he ‘cannot be persuaded but that marriage is one of the means of happiness’. His sister, who has been conducting her own observations among families in the wider world, is not sure whether it is not rather ‘one of the innumerable modes of human misery’. Here she explores areas of the human terrain that are only hinted at in Jane Austen (most notably I suppose in the Bennets, possibly in General Tilney and his dead wife and in the short lived marriage of Maria Bertram and Mr Rushworth):

When I see and reckon the various forms of connubial infelicity, the unexpected causes of lasting discord, the diversities of temper, the oppositions of opinion, the rude collisions of contrary desire where both are urged by violent impulses, the obstinate contests of disagreeing virtues, where both are supported by consciousness of good intention, I am sometimes disposed to think with the severer casuists of most nations, that marriage is rather permitted than approved, and that none, but by the instigation of a passion too much indulged, entangle themselves with indissoluble compacts.²⁰

Yet if marriage results in misery, the unmarried state produces, if anything, a life that is harsher still. Single people, the princess finds,

dream away their time without friendship, without fondness, and are driven to rid themselves of the day, for which they have no use, by childish amusements, or vicious delights. They act as beings under the constant sense of some known inferiority, that fills their minds with rancour, and their tongues with censure. They are peevish at home, and malevolent abroad; and, as the outlaws of human nature, make it their business and their pleasure to disturb that society which debars them from its privileges. To live without feeling or exciting sympathy, to be fortunate without adding to the felicity of others, or afflicted without tasting the balm of pity, is a state more gloomy than solitude: it is not retreat but exclusion from mankind.²¹

Though the debate about the merits of marriage cannot, by the terms of the

social comedy to which Jane Austen has committed herself, be worked out in the structure of the novels, in *Emma* it is at least shadowed in the conversation that the heroine has with Harriet early in the book. To Emma's assurance that if she herself were to marry, she 'must expect to repent it', Harriet replies that it is 'odd to hear a woman talk so'.²² Harriet, instinctively right where her more sophisticated friend is misguided, knows that marriage is, to use the words of Rasselas, 'the dictate of nature'; and Emma's conviction that being married could bring no possible improvement to the situation that she already enjoys (mistress of Hartfield, 'first and always right' in her father's eyes) merely prompts the horrifying prospect of the alternative: 'But then, to be an old maid at last, like Miss Bates!' The dichotomy expressed in exaggerated terms by Johnson is collapsed into a much less extreme form as Jane Austen examines the opposed and equally unsatisfactory views of marriage in *Rasselas* and finds them unrealistic, as no doubt they were intended to be. The most notable of her characters to live single is of course Miss Bates, and she might have been created as a repudiation of Johnson's – or at least the princess's – description. Emma begins by happily appropriating Harriet's picture of awfulness:

That is as formidable an image as you could present, Harriet; and if I thought I should ever be like Miss Bates! so silly – so satisfied – so smiling – so prosing – so undistinguishing and unfastidious – and so apt to tell every thing relative to every body about me, I would marry to-morrow.

Here, seen through the medium of Emma's youthful impatience, is a caricature of Miss Bates which in the particularities of its observation, brings an actual human creature before us in a way that Johnson with the generalities of his description does not attempt. And whereas he, through the princess, presents a predetermined moral view that is, at the close of the speech, summed up and fixed ('it is not retreat but exclusion from mankind'), Jane Austen allows a fluidity both in her speaker and in the presentation of the person she is describing that is at once human and humane:

A single woman, with a very narrow income, must be a ridiculous, disagreeable, old maid! the proper sport for boys and girls ... for a very narrow income has a tendency to contract the mind, and sour the temper. Those who can barely live, and who live perforce in a very small, and generally very inferior, society, may well be illiberal and cross. This does not apply, however, to Miss Bates; she is only too good natured and too silly to suit me; but, in general, she is very much to the taste of everybody, though single and though poor. Poverty certainly has not contracted her mind; I really believe, if she had only a shilling in the world, she would be very likely to give away sixpence of it; and nobody is afraid of her: that is a great charm.²³

Even while Emma is speaking, she realises that the type of the spinster which she is delineating – the type summarised by the princess – will not fit Miss Bates, and as she moves from the general to the individual, we can see the transition from the moral to the psychological that marks the difference between Johnson's art and that of Jane Austen.

The debate in *Rasselas* is allowed no more positive resolution than the ‘celebrated judgment as to matrimony’ that ‘marriage has many pains, but celibacy has no pleasures’,²⁴ a remark which Jane Austen was quite happy to adapt to Mansfield Park and Portsmouth, without for one moment endorsing it, either in general apropos her heroes and heroines or specifically with regard to Miss Bates.

One further aspect of the discussion of marriage in *Rasselas* has some bearing on *Emma*, and for that matter on *Pride and Prejudice* and *Persuasion* as well. Confronted with the miseries of married life described to him by his sister, the prince suggests that the problem lies in the fact that people marry too young, before they are sufficiently mature to ascertain ‘conformity of opinions, similarity of manners, rectitude of judgment, or purity of sentiment’.²⁵ Though this cannot be said to happen to any of Jane Austen’s heroes and heroines, since it is an essential purpose of her novels to allow them to learn about each other first, it almost happens to Marianne and Willoughby and to Elizabeth and Wickham. Furthermore, it undoubtedly did happen to Mr and Mrs Bennet; and his remark that his wife might send the girls on their own to Netherfield since as she is ‘as handsome as any of them’ Mr Bingley might like her the best of the party,²⁶ could well be a humorous glance at another objection of the prince’s to early marriage, which is that ‘the daughter begins to bloom before the mother can be content to fade, and neither can forbear to wish for the absence of the other’. His similar objection that ‘the son is eager to enjoy the world before the father is willing to forsake it’ is only echoed more distantly, not least because often in Jane Austen it is women – Mrs Ferrars, Mrs Churchill – who exercise financial power over the next generation; but something of the impatience with parental authority that Johnson alludes to may be seen in its temporary overthrow by Tom Bertram during his father’s absence in *Antigua*.

To the prince’s hopeful view that the evils of a rashly contracted marriage would be avoided ‘by that deliberation and delay which prudence prescribes to irrevocable choice’ his sister responds bleakly that she has been told ‘that late marriages are not eminently happy’. She adds that it is a question ‘too important to be neglected’, and indeed Jane Austen does not neglect it. The princess’s reasons are clear and she expresses them in such uncompromising terms that they seem to require a stronger answer than Johnson permits her brother to give. It is dangerous, she says,

for a man and woman to suspend their fate upon each other, at a time when opinions are fixed, and habits are established; when friendships have been contracted on both sides, when life has been planned into method, and the mind has long enjoyed the contemplation of its own prospects.

... even though mutual esteem produce mutual desire to please, time itself, as it modifies unchangeably the external mien, determines likewise the direction of the passions, and gives an inflexible rigidity to the manners. Long customs are not easily broken: he that attempts to change the course of his own life, very often labours in vain; and how shall we do that for others which we are seldom able to do for ourselves?

Rasselas is able only to reply rather weakly that whenever he will seek a wife his first question will be ‘whether she be willing to be led by reason’ – an idea that his sister demolishes at once by pointing out the many circumstances in which human beings never act reasonably. ‘Wretched would be the pair,’ she exclaims, ‘above all names of wretchedness, who should be doomed to adjust by reason every morning all the minute detail of a domestick day.’ The most that the princess can hope for is that ‘those who marry late are best pleased with their children, and those who marry early with their partners’, to which her brother adds the somewhat lame conclusion that the ‘union of these two affections ... would produce all that could be wished. Perhaps there is a time when marriage might unite them, a time neither too early for the father, nor too late for the husband.’ In the course of the discussion the argument is not permitted to remain stable; initially early marriage is warned against for the sake of the couples themselves, not just on account of their relations with their children, yet by the end it is deemed to be favourable to happiness between the partners. While this may be characteristic of Johnson’s combative delight in robust, contradictory sophistry, it does not do, we feel, for Jane Austen. As far as she is concerned, sensible people do proceed by reason; and the most reasonable way in which people considering marriage can behave is to acquire a sound knowledge of both themselves and each other. Whereas Rasselas and his sister do not consider the possibility of an inequality in age, two of her heroines – Marianne and Emma – marry men older than themselves, and three of the others – Catherine, Elizabeth and Fanny – marry men who, though of a roughly similar age, behave to them as if they were older, and at least could not be said to make their choice ‘in the immaturity of youth, in the ardour of desire, without judgment, without foresight’.²⁷ Anne and Captain Wentworth, on the other hand, at twenty-seven and thirty-one respectively, marry with the ‘advantage of maturity of mind, consciousness of right, and one independent fortune between them’²⁸ that seem to make an exact and conclusive answer to the precise question raised by Johnson of the optimum age for marrying.

Rasselas, with its anti-romantic stance, entirely eschews any kind of sensationalism, the most dramatic event of the novel being the abduction of the princess’s lady companion by an Arab chieftain, whose purpose, far from being the expected one of leading her to a fate worse than death, or indeed to death itself, is purely financial: he wants the ransom – and a fairly small one at that. Jane Austen also avoids sensationalism of course, such seductions or attempted seductions as occur in the novels being relegated to secondary narratives recounted by the characters. In this she differs from several of the novelists she most admired – Richardson, obviously; even Fanny Burney, whose *Evelina* is in real danger from the groups of predatory young men on her night-time visit to Vauxhall Gardens. It is worth examining the Vauxhall scene in *Evelina* (a novel, incidentally, which it amused Jane Austen to hear a young Oxford undergraduate describe as having been written by Dr Johnson – who, of course, did indeed greatly admire it);²⁹ the unwelcome attentions that the heroine receives from Sir Clement Willoughby after he has rescued her anticipate Mr Elton’s behaviour to Emma in the carriage

on returning from the dinner at Randalls. The account is given by Evelina herself in a letter to her guardian:

He caught my hand, and eagerly pressing it, in a passionate voice, said, ‘O that I had sooner met with thee!’

Surprised at a freedom so unexpected, I angrily broke from him, saying, ‘Is this the protection you give me, Sir Clement?’

And then I saw, what the perturbation of my mind had prevented my sooner noticing, that he had led me, though I know not how, into another of the dark alleys, instead of the place whither I had meant to go.

‘Good God!’ I cried, ‘where am I? – What way are you going? –’

‘Where,’ answered he, ‘we shall be least observed.’

Astonished at this speech, I stopped short, and declared I would go no further.

‘And why not, my angel?’ again endeavouring to take my hand.

My heart beat with resentment; I pushed him away from me with all my strength, and demanded how he dared treat me with such insolence.³⁰

He has assumed, wrongly, that she has made her way to the dark remote walks, unaccompanied, with the intention of soliciting male company; realising his mistake, as she bursts into tears, he becomes even more passionate:

He flew to me, and actually flung himself at my feet, as if regardless who might see him, saying, ‘O Miss Anville – loveliest of women – forgive my – my – I beseech you forgive me; – if I have offended, – if I have hurt you – I could kill myself at the thought! –’

And a few moments later:

‘My dearest life, surely it must be known to you, that the man does not breathe, who adores you so passionately, so fervently, so tenderly as I do! – why then will you delight in perplexing me? – in keeping me in suspense – in torturing me with doubt? –’

‘I, Sir, delight in perplexing you! – You are much mistaken. – Your suspense, your doubts, your perplexities, – are of your own creating; and, believe me, Sir, they may *offend*, but they can never *delight* me: – but, as you have yourself raised, you must yourself satisfy them.’

This is not the first time that Evelina has been subjected to Sir Clement’s attentions; on a previous occasion, they are, like Emma and Mr Elton, confined in a carriage, driving back through the streets of London at night after the opera. This scene is also worth considering. ‘All words, all powers of speech,’ he tells her, ‘are too feeble to express the admiration I feel of your excellencies.’

‘Indeed,’ cried I, ‘if you did not talk in one language, and think in another, you would never suppose that I could give credit to praise so very much above my desert.’

This speech, which I made very gravely, occasioned still stronger protestations, which he continued to pour forth, and I continued to disclaim, till I began to wonder that we were not in Queen-Ann-Street, and begged he would desire the coachman to drive faster.

‘And does this little moment,’ cried he, ‘which is the first of happiness I have ever known, does it already appear so very long to you?’

‘I am afraid the man has mistaken the way,’ answered I, ‘or else we should ere now have been at our journey’s end. I must beg you will speak to him.’

‘And can you think me so much my own enemy? – if my good genius has inspired the man with a desire of prolonging my happiness, can you expect that I should counter-act its indulgence?’³¹

The situation in *Emma* is, of course, very different. Unlike Evelina, Emma is in no physical danger from Mr Elton, though the affront to her dignity is just as great and the effect on her conscience, with regard to Harriet, is considerably worse. Whereas Sir Clement, as a man, and of a class higher than Evelina’s, takes the commanding role, in *Emma* the positions are reversed: the authority that comes naturally to Emma from her consciousness of social superiority is quickly able to quell Mr Elton’s impetuosity. We should note, incidentally, that Mr Elton’s expressions of passion are not at first quoted directly: he is initially permitted only the lesser authority of free indirect speech (often used, especially in this novel, to reflect absurdity in conversation); Emma’s response in direct speech immediately reinforces her power over him.

... scarcely had they passed the sweep-gate and joined the other carriage, than she found her subject cut up – her hand seized – her attention demanded, and Mr. Elton actually making violent love to her: availing himself of the precious opportunity, declaring sentiments which must be already well known, hoping – fearing – adoring – ready to die if she refused him; but flattering himself that his ardent attachment and unequalled love and unexampled passion could not fail of having some effect, and in short, very much resolved on being seriously accepted as soon as possible. It really was so. Without scruple – without apology – without much apparent diffidence, Mr. Elton, the lover of Harriet, was professing himself *her* lover. She tried to stop him; but vainly; he would go on, and say it all. Angry as she was, the thought of the moment made her resolve to restrain herself when she did speak. She felt that half this folly must be drunkenness, and therefore could hope that it might belong only to the passing hour. Accordingly, with a mixture of the serious and the playful, which she hoped would best suit his half and half state, she replied,

‘I am very much astonished, Mr. Elton. This to *me*! You forget yourself – you take me for my friend – any message to Miss Smith I shall be happy to deliver; but no more of this to *me*, if you please.’

‘Miss Smith! – message to Miss Smith! – What could she possibly mean!’ – And he repeated her words with such assurance of accent, such boastful pretence of amazement, that she could not help replying with quickness,

‘Mr. Elton, this is the most extraordinary conduct! and I can account for it only in one way; you are not yourself, or you could not speak to me, or of Harriet, in such a manner. Command yourself enough to say no more, and I will endeavour to forget it.’³²

But although he has been drinking ‘Mr. Weston’s good wine’, he is not drunk; and

having protested that it was never of Harriet that he has been thinking, he declares his feelings with complete unambiguousness:

‘... Every thing that I have said or done, for many weeks past, has been with the sole view of marking my adoration of yourself. You cannot really, seriously, doubt it. No! – (in an accent meant to be insinuating) – I am sure you have seen and understood me.’

It would be impossible to say what Emma felt, on hearing this – which of all her unpleasant sensations was uppermost. She was too completely overpowered to be immediately able to reply: and two moments of silence being ample encouragement for Mr. Elton’s sanguine state of mind, he tried to take her hand again, as he joyously exclaimed –

‘Charming Miss Woodhouse! allow me to interpret this interesting silence. It confesses that you have long understood me.’

‘No, sir,’ cried Emma, ‘it confesses no such thing....’³³

When the reality of the situation is finally understood by them both, they are left in a state of ‘swelling resentment, and mutually deep mortification’: ‘If there had not been so much anger, there would have been desperate awkwardness’. And when he gets out at the vicarage, she returns to Hartfield ‘under indescribable irritation of spirits’.³⁴ Emma is angry with him for his presumption, he with her for her refusal. And although no harm has come to her, one can sympathise with her sense of the utter impropriety of his behaviour, even allowing, as on reflection she has to do, for the false impression she had been giving him, in seeking to promote his interest in Harriet.

Behind the affront offered by Mr Elton to Emma, and the perhaps more palpably dangerous attentions of Sir Clement Willoughby to Evelina, lies a literary tradition of actual violation of women best exemplified in the 18th century by Richardson’s *Clarissa Harlowe*. And beyond this again lies a debate about the value of a woman’s chastity that stretches back through the Middle Ages into folklore and legend. In Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure* it is put to the test when Isabella, who is about to enter a nunnery, comes before the strict deputy, Angelo, to plead for the life of her brother, whom he has condemned to death for getting his betrothed, Juliet, pregnant. Angelo, strait-laced, severe and puritanical, has been left by the Duke in charge of a corrupt and licentious Vienna, which he sets about cleaning up; but when the chaste and vulnerable woman puts herself at his mercy, he experiences an appalling and irresistible desire for her that results in his attempting to bribe her: he will spare her brother’s life if she will sleep with him. She is appalled and roused to an anger far deeper than Emma’s; she is roused too to action, attempting to blackmail him in return:

I will proclaim thee, Angelo, look for’t.

Sign me a present pardon for my brother,

Or with an outstretch’d throat I’ll tell the world aloud

What man thou art.³⁵

But he has the obvious answer, which at once disempowers her: ‘Who will believe thee, Isabel?’ Resentment, mortification and anger are certainly what she feels

towards Angelo; but she does not hesitate in the decision she has to make – in fact it is not even a decision. ‘More than our brother is our chastity,’ she says, and goes off to prepare him for death.

Disgusted as she is by Angelo’s hypocrisy, it is in her brother’s reaction that she appears to feel as a real violation. At first Claudio, equally appalled by Angelo’s demand, declares ‘Thou shalt not do’t’. But as he contemplates the terrors of death, his resolve begins to weaken. ‘Sweet sister, let me live,’ he pleads:

What sin you do to save a brother’s life,
Nature dispenses with the deed so far
That it becomes a virtue.³⁶

Her reaction is immediate and startling:

O, you beast!
O faithless coward! O dishonest wretch!
Wilt thou be made a man out of my vice?
Is’t not a kind of incest, to take life
From thine own sister’s shame?³⁷

Johnson, in his comment on this speech in his edition of Shakespeare, registers the shock of her words and seeks to mitigate it. ‘In Isabella’s declamation,’ he writes, ‘there is something harsh, and something forced and far-fetched. But her indignation cannot be thought violent when we consider her not only as a virgin but as a nun.’³⁸

We do not know if Jane Austen’s father possessed Shakespeare in Johnson’s edition, or if perhaps it was in the library at Godmersham, but we do know that Jane herself knew *Measure for Measure*, since it is one of the plays she quotes from in the first chapter of *Northanger Abbey*. We are told that amongst the ‘great store of information’ Catherine Morland gained from Shakespeare was the fact that

‘The poor beetle, which we tread upon,
‘In corporal sufferance feels a pang as great
‘As when a giant dies.’³⁹

This speech is, interestingly, from the same scene; Isabella, already fearing Claudio’s answer, asks him if he dares die, and gives the beetle as an example of the relative insignificance of death. The scene must have made an impression on Jane Austen – not surprisingly, given the attention it pays to the moral predicament of a defenceless woman; and the appalling test it makes of the love of a brother and sister would surely also have engaged her sympathy.

In the final scene of the play, Isabella denounces Angelo to the returned Duke, who actually knows what he has done, since he has been present all along, guiding events disguised as a friar. He has instituted a bed-trick, whereby Angelo thinks that he is sleeping with Isabella, whereas in fact the woman who has come to his bed is Mariana, whom he jilted but who still loves him. Nevertheless, Angelo has secretly insisted on Claudio’s execution, and the Duke, though in fact he has saved him by effecting the substitution of a dead prisoner, tells Isabella (still as the friar) that Claudio has been executed. His authority restored, the Duke

commands Angelo to marry Mariana and promptly condemns him to death.

Measure for Measure is a play in which, to use the words of a modern version of the Lord's Prayer, all are brought 'to the time of trial'; and Mariana pleads for her husband's life, begging Isabella to plead with her. In one of the most moving scenes of reconciliation in Shakespeare, one wronged woman kneels by the side of another in a moment of transcendent sympathy and asks for forgiveness for the man who, as he thought, took her chastity and, as she still thinks, ordered her brother's death:

Most bounteous sir:

Look, if it please you, on this man condemn'd

As if my brother liv'd. I partly think

A due sincerity govern'd his deeds

Till he did look on me. Since it is so,

Let him not die. My brother had but justice,

In that he did the thing for which he died:

For Angelo,

His act did not o'ertake his bad intent,

And must be buried but as an intent

That perish'd by the way. Thoughts are no subjects;

Intents, but merely thoughts.⁴⁰

Eventually, Claudio is produced, Angelo pardoned and the Duke, rather perfunctorily, claims Isabella's hand. But she is given no voice in any of this, and the words of this speech are the last she speaks in the play: having been brought to the time of trial and triumphantly passed the test, she can be allowed to retreat into the woman's role and recede into the background while the men sort everything out.

How would Jane Austen have reacted to that? How did Dr Johnson? Well, he has nothing to say about it; but he does have a characteristically trenchant and provocative comment on Isabella's speech. He regards her argument as 'extraordinary':

That Angelo had committed all the crimes charged against him, as far as he could commit them, is evident. The only 'intent' which 'his act did not overtake,' was the defilement of Isabel. Of this Angelo was only intentionally guilty.

Angelo's crimes were such, as must sufficiently justify punishment, whether its end be to secure the innocent from wrong, or to deter guilt by example; and I believe every reader feels some indignation when he finds him spared. From what extenuation of his crime can Isabel, who yet supposes her brother dead, form any plea in his favour[?]⁴¹

Clearly Johnson's argument here is not with Isabella but with Shakespeare, and the heart of his criticism seems to be that Isabella, nun-like and virtuous though she is shown to be, cannot escape being seen by her creator as guilty of the besetting sin of all women, vanity. Johnson singles out the lines

A due sincerity govern'd his deeds,

‘Till he did look on me; since it is so,

Let him not die...

and comments:

I am afraid our varlet poet intended to inculcate, that women think ill of nothing that raises the credit of their beauty, and are ready, however virtuous, to pardon any act which they think incited by their own charms.

The phrase ‘varlet poet’ does not perhaps quite exonerate Johnson from possibly thinking the same himself.

If Jane Austen read this – and we cannot know whether she did or not – it must have given her pause for thought. But what is certain is that she dealt with exactly that idea when she came to write Emma’s reflections on Mr Elton’s behaviour in the carriage:

Contrary to the usual course of things, Mr. Elton’s wanting to pay his addresses to her had sunk him in her opinion. His professions and his proposals did him no service. She thought nothing of his attachment, and was insulted by his hopes. He wanted to marry well, and having the arrogance to raise his eyes to her, pretended to be in love; but she was perfectly easy as to his not suffering any disappointment that need be cared for.⁴²

Emma cannot for one moment be charged with the vanity that Johnson accuses Shakespeare of assuming in Isabella; but it is just possible that by qualifying her statement with the phrase ‘contrary to the usual course of things’ Jane Austen is recognising the general truth of the notion, and forgiving our varlet poet.

Notes

1 *MP*, ed. R.W. Chapman (3rd edn, Oxford, 1934), p. 338.

3 *MP*, p. 337.

4 *E*, ed. R.W. Chapman (3rd edn, Oxford, 1933), p. 75.

5 The Yale Edition of the *Works of Samuel Johnson*, Vol. VII (New Haven and London, 1968), pp. 64–5.

6 A copy of Vol. 2 with JA’s name written on the title page is held in the Beinecke Library, Yale University (listed as K15 in David Gilson, *A Bibliography of Jane Austen* [Oxford, 1982]).

7 *Rasselas*, ch. 18.

8 *E*, p. 37.

9 *Rambler* 43.

10 *Rambler* 196.

11 *Rasselas*, ch. 1.

12 *Rasselas*, ch. 2.

13 *E*, p. 5.

14 *Rasselas*, ch. 3.

15 *Rasselas*, ch. 4.

16 *E*, p. 13.

17 *E*, p. 14.

- 18 *E*, p. 12.
- 19 *Rasselas*, ch. 44.
- 20 *Rasselas*, ch. 28.
- 21 *Rasselas*, ch. 26.
- 22 *E*, p. 84.
- 23 *E*, p. 85.
- 24 *Rasselas*, ch. 26.
- 25 *Rasselas*, ch. 29.
- 26 *P&P*, p. 4.
- 27 *Rasselas*, ch. 29.
- 28 *P*, p. 248.
- 29 *Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Oxford, 1995), p. 43.
- 30 *Evelina*, Vol. II, Letter XV.
- 31 *Evelina*, Vol. I, Letter XXI.
- 32 *E*, pp. 129-30.
- 33 *E*, p. 131.
- 34 *E*, p. 132.
- 35 *Measure for Measure*, II.iv ll. 150-153.
- 36 *Measure for Measure*, III.i ll. 133-135.
- 37 *Ibid.*, ll. 135-139.
- 38 *Works*, Vol. VII, p. 197.
- 39 *NA*, p. 16. Shakespeare has 'And the poor beetle that we tread upon'; Johnson places commas as JA does.
- 40 *Measure for Measure* V.i ll. 441-452.
- 41 *Works*, Vol. VII, p. 213.
- 42 *E*, p. 135.

Jane Austen manuscripts: a note on the paper

Andrew Honey

In the spring of 2007 through work that I was doing for a library conservation project at the monastery of St Catherine in Sinai, Egypt, I was lucky enough to visit New York. A Jane Austen Society travel bursary enabled me to extend my stay and I used my extra days to study the physical structure of the four Jane Austen literary manuscripts held at the Pierpont Morgan Museum and Library. The following brief report will explain how I came to study these manuscripts and will outline some of my findings.

I work as a book conservator at the Bodleian Library in Oxford and my interest in Jane Austen's manuscripts began in 2006 when I was asked to draft a conservation treatment proposal for the manuscript of 'Volume the First', Jane Austen's earliest volume of juvenilia, which was then in a very fragile state. The need to conserve this vulnerable manuscript had been known for some time but it was further prompted by plans to digitize the manuscript as part of a project made possible through a grant awarded to Professor Kathryn Sutherland to film all of Jane Austen's holograph fiction manuscripts. This presented an opportunity to conserve the manuscript at the same time as the digitization, to undertake investigations into the manuscript's structure, and all while Professor Sutherland was on hand to offer expert advice.

'Volume the First' is a small, rather square paper manuscript with some remains of a leather spine and very worn marbled-paper boards marked with its title in ink. The manuscript was finished and dated by Jane Austen on 'June 3^d 1793' and while its binding is now worn and many leaves are loose or detached it is complete and the leaves are in a generally good condition. A close study of the structure of the manuscript, its paper stock, the location and disposition of its watermarks allowed me to confirm that this manuscript was bought as a bound blank-book and that it was used as we would an exercise book today. The arrangement of the watermarks in each of the six quires showed that they were formed by stacking eight sheets of paper; these were then folded parallel to their long side and cut into two to produce two quires of a quarto format, i.e. each sheet of paper would produce four leaves though these four leaves would be in two different quires. This method of folding paper is not used when binding printed books and stationers or binders clearly took a different approach when making blank memorandum or account books in the late eighteenth century. The six quires were sewn and the outer three leaves of the first and last quires were used as pastedowns to strengthen the binding rather than having added endleaves, again a technique not known with printed books. Although the slightly scruffy manuscript at first seemed unremarkable, its striking arrangement of paper seemed to mark it out as unusual.¹ Owing to the method of folding, each quire would only have either watermarks or countermarks, never both, and the surface

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tags. There cannot be a more gentle, affectionate
heart, or more obliging manners, when acting
without restraint. Her little Cousins are all very
fond of her. — Y^r affec^ted
Cath^y Vernon

Letter 19.

Lady Susan. to M^{rs} Johnson.

Churchill.

You will be eager I know to hear something
farther of Frederica, & perhaps may think me neg-
ligent for not writing before. She arrived with
her Uncle last Thursday fortnight, when of course
I lost no time in demanding the reason of her be-
haviour, & soon found myself to have been perfectly
right in attributing it to my own letter. — The pur-
port of it frightened her so thoroughly that with a
mixture of true girlish perverseness & folly, without

MS page of 'Lady Susan'

arrangement of the paper fell in a regular pattern with the wire side always facing the felt side in any opening.

The close study of the structure of the manuscript is often needed before conservation work can take place, and as in the case of 'Volume the First' I was fortunate to be able also to study Volumes the Second and Third, similar quarto manuscripts now in the British Library. All three manuscripts were professionally produced as blank books and all have the same evidence from surface arrangement

and watermark disposition to show that they were folded in the same way. My trip to New York presented me with the opportunity of comparing the three volumes of juvenilia with the manuscripts now at the Pierpont Morgan. The Morgan holds a large collection of Jane Austen material including four literary manuscripts.² These four manuscripts range from a single scrap of paper to the eighty leaves of 'Lady Susan', but they all allow a glimpse into the choices of writing support that Jane Austen faced and help to show her working methods. I had planned two days to consult these manuscripts but when faced by the riches extended this to a third day and missed some of the sight-seeing opportunities of New York!

I will briefly list the manuscripts:²

Susan: a novel in two volumes (Northanger Abbey, PML MA 1958)

Scrap of paper bearing the above heading. Orientation of the one chain line through the sheet would seem to indicate that it was written on a quarto sheet. Could it have been a similar blank notebook? Evidence that it was mounted on a scrap book or album page of grey paper with the additional note 'Miss Austen' added below. Does this mean that the original didn't have her name?

Plan of a novel (PML MA 1034)

Single sheet of paper folded to produce a left hand margin to work on. Edges cut but not with a straight edge or plough. Not produced professionally.

The Watsons (PML MA 1034)

Three folded pieces of paper apparently coming from two sheets of paper. Both come from a sheet bearing a countermark 'W S' though the two examples are not identical, probably coming from watermark twins. Evidence of folding and cutting sheets of paper.

Lady Susan (PML MA 1226)

A manuscript now of 80 separated leaves inlaid into a later nineteenth-century album, mounted with leaves from the published version from the 1871 *Memoir*. Although the leaves had been cut from whatever original binding they were contained in, the manuscript presents evidence that allows us to recreate it when compared with the other known quarto notebooks.

Notes

- 1 Sheets of handmade paper in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries usually contain two marks that can be seen when the paper is held up to a strong light: a *watermark* centred on one half of the sheet which is normally a device indicating the size or type of paper, and a *countermark* with a simpler design indicating the paper-maker or date of manufacture centred on the other half. Each sheet of handmade paper has two identifiable sides: the *mould side* with a clear impression from the wires of the paper mould, and the *felt side*

with an impression from the wool felt onto which the paper-maker laid and pressed the newly made wet sheet of paper.

- 2 *Susan: a novel in two volumes* (Northanger Abbey, PML MA 1958), *Plan of a novel* (PML MA 1034), *The Watsons* (PML MA 1034), *Lady Susan* (PML MA 1226). Detailed catalogue records for these manuscripts can be found on Corsair, the Morgan's online catalogue: <http://corsair.morganlibrary.org/>.

The research for this article was carried out with the aid of a travel bursary from the Jane Austen Society.

Jane Austen and the Stars

Brian Southam

Readers may be interested to learn that Jane Austen has been characterised and analysed astrologically. The following extracts are taken from a book originally published by the Theosophical Publishing House in London in 1911 – my information is taken from the 5th edition, 1969 – *From Pioneer to Poet or The Twelve Great Gates: An Expansion of the Signs of the Zodiac Analysed*. The author is named as Isabelle M. Pagan. As we can see from the wording beneath the Horoscope, Miss Pagan was well-informed and consulted the best living authority, William Austen-Leigh, the youngest son of James Edward Austen-Leigh. Willie, as he was known in the family, was then working with his nephew Richard Arthur Austen-Leigh in the preparation of the *Life and Letters of Jane Austen, a Family Record*, published in 1913. However surprised Willie may have been to receive Miss Pagan's enquiry, he responded helpfully, so enabling her to cast the Horoscope and establish the Analysis.

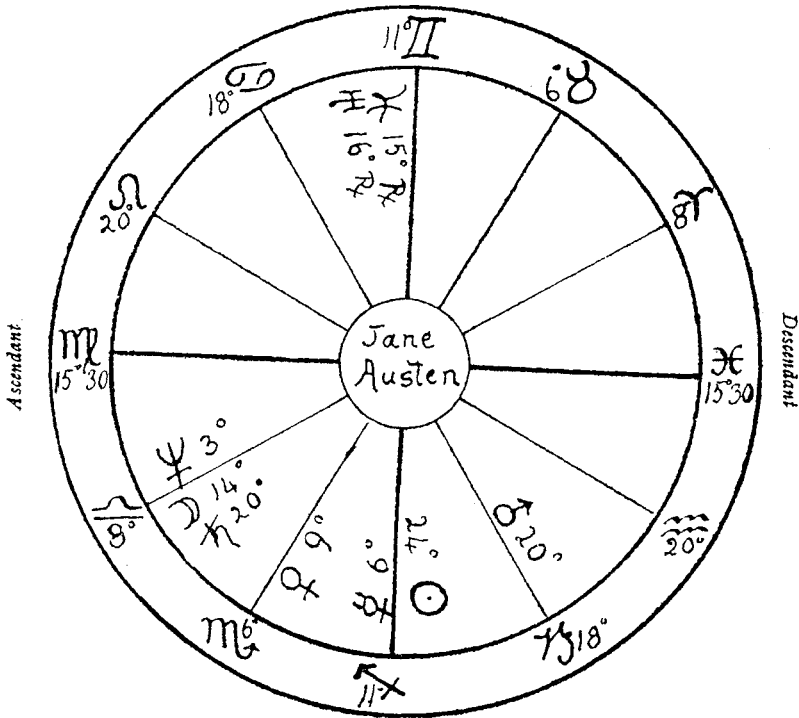
Page 279 refers back to page 94. Here, Miss Pagan discusses the 'Libran style'. Apparently, 'few Librans specialise in literature' and 'the only branch of literature in which women do most easily excel men is ordinary everyday letter-writing, to intimate friends and relatives. The Libran is a capital hand at jotting down the annals of the present day, and can make even trifling details interesting and important' – comments which we can apply, judiciously, to Jane Austen's own method and style in her writing. In this section, Miss Pagan also credits Jane Austen with a 'well-balanced nature'. Again, this is a trait which most of us will recognise both in her life and work.

These pronouncements are delivered with confidence and an air of authority, as well they might be, since Miss Pagan, a Scottish Theosophist and astrologer (1867-1960), is generally recognised in astrological circles as one of the great practitioners of modern times. Learned and widely-read, she is credited with

rescuing astrology from the whiff of charlatanry that had tended to discredit the practice in the nineteenth-century. She lectured widely and her extensive writings are much quoted and anthologised.

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Zenith



Nadir

HOROSCOPE OF JANE AUSTEN

Born on the night of December 16th, 1775, before midnight, at Steventon, Hampshire.

Information kindly furnished by William Austen Leigh, who looked up a letter announcing her birth, written by her father, and still extant. Virgo was rising during the two hours preceding midnight, and her personality, as described by her biographers, makes Leo, the preceding sign, very unlikely.

JANE AUSTEN

In a preceding chapter (page 94) this gifted authoress was claimed as a Libran, because of certain characteristics in her style. Readers will notice that the Moon, Saturn, and Neptune are grouped in Libra, influencing the style, method, character, manner and aspirations; so that the mistake was a pardonable one. A more experienced astrological student than the writer wrote a criticism of this claim, soon after it was published, pointing out the Virgo traits, shown in the description of her personality, remarking on the Virginian skill of the fingers that succeeded "in everything they tried to do", and adding that the date of her death suggested to him that the twenty-first degree of Virgo was rising, when she was born.

This combination of Virginian and Libran influences works out as an exceedingly lovable type—bright, lively, witty and charming; and the strong Sagittarian accentuation would add buoyance, vigour and originality. The Sun in the house of *Home and Heredity* is well placed for one who was even more successful as a dutiful, loving and beloved daughter, sister and aunt, than as a novelist.

The high place she has taken in English literature may be associated with the quick insight given by the brilliant conjunction of Jupiter and Uranus at the Zenith, both trine to the Moon. Neptune, sextile to Mercury, quickens as an already active intellect by adding intuition to it. Any aspect between these two makes the intuitive faculties work so easily that it is often difficult for the native to distinguish what he knows intuitively from what he knows by the exercise of the reason. The only bad aspect here is that of Mars to Saturn—which worked out in poor health.

ANALYSIS OF THE HOROSCOPE OF JANE AUSTEN

A. *Ascendant*: VIRGO ♍. *Ruler*: VULCAN.

DESCRIPTION

	<i>According to Position of Signs</i>		<i>Modified by Position of Planets</i>	
{ <i>Type</i>	Practical	and	Original	☉ in ♄
{ <i>Watchwords</i>	Utility	and	Harmony	♃ in ♌
{ <i>Method</i>	Selective	and	Weighing	♃ in ♌
{ <i>Style</i>	Concise	and	Persuasive	♃ in ♌
{ <i>Intellect</i>	Discriminating	and	Logical	♀ in ♄
{ <i>Speech</i>	Pointed	and	Frank	♀ in ♄
{ <i>Manner</i>	Serious	yet	Gracious	♃ in ♌
{ <i>Bearing</i>	Helpful	and	Charming	♂ in ♀
{ <i>Temperament</i>	Active	and	Buoyant	Ruler in ♄

B. *Zenith*: GEMINI ♊.

{ <i>Functions</i>	Artist	and	Critic	☉ in ♄
{ <i>Outlook</i>	Untrammelled	and	Untrammelled (<i>bis</i>)	♃ in ♊
{ <i>Nature</i>	Sensitive	and	Transparent	☉ in ♄
{ <i>Affections</i>	Spontaneous	and	Passionate	♀ in ♏
{ <i>Attitude</i>	Resourceful	and	Diplomatic	♂ in ♀
{ <i>Sex-attitude</i>	Responsive	and	Submissive	♂ in ♀
{ <i>Disposition</i>	Lavish	and	Lavish (<i>bis</i>)	♃ in ♊

C. *Descendant*: PISCES ♉.

<i>Mind</i>	Receptive	and	Fertile	♃ in ♊
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D. *Nadir*: SAGITTARIUS ♐.

{ <i>Character</i>	Independent	and	Honourable	♃ in ♌
{ <i>Keynotes</i>	Wisdom	and	Wisdom (<i>bis</i>)	☉ in ♄

SUMMARY OF THE HOROSCOPE OF JANE AUSTEN

INFLUENCE OF THE SUN

☉ -n ‡. Those born with the Sun in Sagittarius should find success in some sphere of activity which involves the constant exercise of the reason, and the development of the logical faculty. Wisdom and understanding will be the heart's desire, and everything that favours progress in their direction—travel or exploration, contact with other minds and inquiry into unfamiliar systems of philosophy, theology or law—may be turned to account by the native.

The driving force of the sign is the craving for wisdom and the determination to seek it out through the exercise of the reason; which is sometimes perverted into a tendency to argue or chop-logic, to doubt, to dispute and to deny, till the lamp of Truth is obscured in a fog of casuistry, and the inquirer is lost in a mist of his own making. The Libran accentuation in this horoscope would cancel any belligerent inclination.

INFLUENCE OF THE MOON

☾ in ♎. The Moon in Libra gives a tendency to pass easily and naturally from one kind of work to another, and to adapt oneself to changing conditions and environment and to make the best of them. This position gives a well balanced, loving and lovable nature, and ensures a certain amount of popularity.

INFLUENCE OF THE ASCENDANT

♍. Virgo as ascendant suggests attainment through disinterested and faithful service; through painstaking and possibly highly skilled labour, done on behalf of others, with little or no thought of recognition or reward; through work of some kind which requires discrimination and critical acumen, and an industry that never flags.

INFLUENCE OF THE ZENITH

♊. Gemini at the Zenith gives spiritual aspirations for perfection of expression, and ambitions for some kind of artistic or intellectual achievement that has in it an element of freshness and originality. The outlook is free and untrammelled; even, in some cases, unconventional.

INFLUENCE OF THE DESCENDANT

♓. Pisces descending is associated with a type of mind peculiarly receptive and impressionable, and very frequently alive and responsive to psychic impressions; in short, mediumistic.

INFLUENCE OF THE NADIR

‡. Sagittarius at the Nadir suggests, as the basis of character, a certain sturdy independence, akin to pride, which asks no favour and flatters no man.

The ships of Frank Austen

Clive Caplan

Francis William Austen, known to his family as Frank, was born on 23 April 1774. He was the sixth child in a family of eight; his sister Jane came next: she was born on 17 December 1775. Frank planned to become a sailor and just horth of his twelfth birthday, on 15 April 1786, he entered the Royal Naval Academy in Portsmouth. He graduated on 23 December 1788, and was immediately entered on the books of *Perseverance*.

Six weeks later, on **11 February 1789**, 14 year-old Frank sailed away as a Volunteer on *Perseverance* (36). He would not see his home and family again for nearly four years. His ship was part of a squadron being sent out to the East Indies, where the militant Tippoo Sultan, who had allied himself with the French, was attacking British interests. The Commodore of the expedition was Captain William Cornwallis, installed by the influence of his brother, Lord Cornwallis, Governor General of India. Frank had to call on some influence too, even for his own lowly position, for it was still peacetime and there was great competition for any appointment to active service. He was recommended by Henry Martin, the governor of the Academy. There was no room for the unemployed Captain Horatio Nelson, who had appealed for a ship to his old friend Cornwallis.

23 December 1788 – 5 November 1791: *Perseverance* (36 guns) was a 5th rate frigate of 882 bm (builder's measurement, aka tunnage) and a crew of 270 men, launched on 10 April 1781, and recommissioned for the expedition in October 1788. The captain was Isaac Smith. Also on board was a lieutenant, John Gore, who would become Frank's captain on *Triton* in 1796. Later, when *Perseverance* returned from the East Indies in June 1792, she was laid up, hulked in 1800, and broken up in 1823.

The East Indies squadron that sailed on 11 February 1789 also included these vessels: *Crown* (64), Flagship (Commodore the Hon. William Cornwallis); *Phoenix* (36) (Captain George Anson Byron) a sister ship to *Perseverance*, and in 1814 the future ship of Frank's brother Charles; and two sloops: *Ariel* (16) (Commander Robert Moorsom) and *Atalanta* (16) (Commander Maurice Delgarno). While in the Indies, Delgarno was promoted to captain; his replacement as commander, from October 1791, was Edward James Foote. Later, in 1797/8, when Foote had risen to be captain of *Seahorse*, Frank would serve as his first lieutenant. Foote and his family would become intimates of the Austens (see below). *Minerva* (38) (Captain Robert Manners Sutton) sailed later, on 27 December 1790.

The leading ships reached India in September 1789. On 22 December, after precisely one year as a volunteer, fifteen year-old Frank was promoted to midshipman. For the next two years of 1790-1 the British ships were occupied in blockading the coast against French commerce and suppressing gun running, while Governor General Lord Cornwallis successfully campaigned inland against

Tippoo. The ships of the squadron were then able to begin to return to England. Cornwallis, now promoted to rear admiral, and our midshipman Frank were to stay on and both transferred to *Minerva* on 10 November 1791. *Perseverance* and *Crown* left India in January 1792. Tippoo signed a peace treaty advantageous to the British on 23 February, so Cornwallis was able to take the time to inspect a minor British dockyard in the Andaman Islands, and Fort Cornwallis on Prince of Wales Island (Penang) in the Straits of Malacca.

6-9 November 1791: *Crown* (64), 3rd rate. Commodore Hon. William Cornwallis, Flag Captain James Cornwallis (no relation to the commodore); followed by Lawrence William Halstead. 1405 bm., crew of 500 men, launched 15 March 1782 and recommissioned October 1788. Frank was only on the books of this ship for four days. After returning to England in June 1792, *Crown* became a prison ship in 1798, a powder hulk in 1802, a prison ship again in 1806, and was broken up in 1816.

10 November 1791 to 27 December 1792: *Minerva* (38), 5th rate, 941 bm, launched 3 June 1780, crew 270. *Minerva* sailed for the East Indies 27 December 1790. By 1793 she was the only active navy ship remaining on the East India station, and she took part in the capture of the French base at Pondicherry on 23 August. The captain was John Whitby. Return home was delayed by repairs, but the ship finally left for England on 12 January 1794. Arriving in April, she was paid off. Renamed *Pallas* in 1798, she was re-employed as a troopship, but was broken up in 1803.

28 December 1792 to 25 June 1793: *Dispatch* (12), sloop, was captured from the French in the East Indies in 1790. Crew of 90 men. On 28 December 1792, after three years as a midshipman, eighteen year-old Frank was commissioned to be a lieutenant on *Dispatch*. Southam (in *Jane Austen and the Navy*, p. 46) reports that his stay was limited, as the ship had to be repaired, and that he therefore returned to *Minerva* as a supernumerary lieutenant. The ship was sold 7 August 1801.

In June 1793 news of the outbreak of war with France reached Madras. Frank then left for England in July on a Company transport, arriving at Southampton on 13 November 1793.

15 March 1794 to 23 May 1795: *Lark* (16 of six lbs, and 14 swivels). A brand-new sloop of 430bm, just launched on 15 February 1794. Crew 125 men. The commander was first Josias Rowley and then William Ogilvy, and Frank was the first lieutenant. *Lark* was part of the North Sea fleet, which had to cope with the ongoing withdrawals and evacuations of the British expeditionary force under the Duke of York, and the ship participated in the extraction of British troops from Ostend and Nieuport in June-July 1794. On 2 March 1795 *Lark* became part of the flotilla to transport Princess Caroline from the German coast to her ill-fated marriage with the Prince of Wales. The outward crossing was beset by strong wind, by fog, and by ice. On the 6th all contact was lost with *Lark* and it was feared that the ship had come to grief, but to the great joy of all she rejoined safely on the 11th. The Princess did not materialise until the 28th, at last permitting the

convoy to leave next day for England. It arrived on 5 April, releasing *Lark* to other duties. *Lark* was indeed destined to sink in a gale – but not until 8 August 1809, off Santo Domingo – and with the loss of all hands but three. This was a fate which could well have befallen Captain Wentworth's sloop *Asp*, in *Persuasion*. Fortunately for him, he 'never had two days of foul weather all the time I was at sea in her'.

24 May to 13 September 1795: *Andromeda* (32), 5th rate, 721 bm, crew 220, launched 21 April 1784, and recommissioned August 1794. Based in the Downs, this ship was also assigned to the North Sea station, reinforcements to this sector now being necessary in view of the French having asserted control over Holland and the Dutch fleet. The ship escorted convoys to and from the Baltic. Frank, now 21, was first lieutenant. He owed this preferment to a relationship he had established with a new patron, Captain James Gambier, who like himself was a fervent evangelical. At first the ship's captain was Thomas Sotherby, but he left the ship in June and was succeeded by William Taylor. Frank continued to search for early advancement and quickly grasped at an emerging new opportunity to become a lieutenant on a flagship. *Andromeda* was laid up at the Peace of Amiens in 1802, entered harbour service in 1808, and was broken up in 1811.

14 September to 23 November 1795: *Prince George* (90), 2nd rate, 1955 bm, crew 738, launched 1772. In March of 1795 the ship had been refitted at Chatham, and James Gambier was to be the new captain, but he was quickly superseded on being appointed to the first of his three terms on the Board of Admiralty. The new captain was James Bowen and Frank was ranked as the lowly eighth lieutenant out of nine on board. *Prince George* was the flagship of Rear Admiral Hugh Christian, commodore of a major expedition – no less than half the active British army, 30,000 men, were to be sent to the West Indies (this expedition is that in which Cassandra Austen's fiancé, Tom Fowle, sailed as a chaplain, only to die of yellow fever off Santo Domingo in February 1797). The fleet set sail 16 November but was almost at once destroyed by a memorable storm. Ships were dismasted, they foundered or were driven ashore. Hundreds drowned. *Prince George* lost her rudder and was otherwise so damaged that she had to be withdrawn from service and paid off. All the officers then transferred to *Glory* for another try to get the expedition rolling. Later, again refitted, *Prince George* fought in the battle of Cape St Vincent on 14 February 1797. The ship was hulked in 1817, made a sheer hulk in 1832, and broken up in 1839.

24 November 1795 to 5 March 1796: *Glory* (90), 2nd rate, 1944 bm, crew 738, launched 5 July 1788. The captain was again James Bowen, and Frank was again a low-ranking lieutenant. Called into action to replace the stricken *Prince George*, the new flagship *Glory* again carried Admiral Christian as commodore. The reorganized fleet sailed on 3 December but unbelievably was again set upon and scattered by the renewed onset of extraordinary storms. *Glory* was in such straits that the commanding General, Sir Ralph Abercromby, was called up on deck, as the ship was believed to be sinking, but the redoubtable hero sent back word that he could die just as well below decks. The ship battled the winds for

seven weeks trying to clear the Channel but eventually had to give up and returned to port on 25 January 1796. *Glory* was a prison ship in 1809, a powder hulk in 1814, and was broken up in 1825.

This unprecedented succession of storms went down in history as ‘Christian’s Gales’ and was attributed by some to Divine intervention. Not much attention has been paid to Frank’s postings to *Prince George* and *Glory* but his life was in more danger then than in any other point in his career; many more sailors died from disease, or from the elements, than from enemy action. The main body of the expedition finally made its departure in February 1796, but Frank, perhaps thinking that the Lord had spoken, transferred himself out to *Shannon*.

6 March to 26 June 1796: *Shannon* (32) was a new 5th rate frigate of 796 bm, crew of 240, just commissioned, and built of pitch pine rather than oak. The strength of such fir-built ships was suspect and the weight of her armament was reduced from 18 to 12 pounders. She was launched at Deptford Dock Yard on 9 February 1796. Her captain was Alexander Fraser. Frank was 3rd lieutenant on this ship which, as its name might imply, was built to cruise off the Irish coast. Novelty notwithstanding, the ship was not a success and was later sold in May 1802 during the Peace of Amiens. Frank found that he and the captain, a tyrannical man (Southam, pp. 86, 281), were not suited to one another and he left the ship and went onto half pay for a few months. (This ship is not that *Shannon* which so memorably took the *Chesapeake* during the War of 1812.)

16 September 1796 to 5 October 1797: *Triton* (32), another new fir-built 5th rate of 856 bm, crew of 220 men. This ship was a unique experiment, personally designed by James Gambier, now a rear admiral, but like *Shannon* her timbers were not trustworthy and her armament had to be downgraded to 9 pounder cannons. She was launched at Deptford on 5 September 1796, and assigned to a frigate squadron operating in the Channel under Sir John Borlase Warren. The captain was John Gore, with whom Frank had sailed on *Perseverance*. Frank was first lieutenant and in November had to press men for the crew from an Indiaman. In February 1797 the ship captured three privateers in the Channel. *Triton*, by being active at sea, avoided major involvement in the May-June mutiny at Spithead and the Nore, but the ship was used to transport mutineers, including two from her own crew, to Spithead for trial (Dugan, p. 360). Back at sea, on 11 August, the good work continued: *Triton* broke up a small French convoy and destroyed its escorts. The vessel was downgraded to a guardship at Waterford in 1807, hulked in 1817, and broken up in Newfoundland in 1820.

6 October 1797 to 13 February 1798: *Seahorse* (38), 5th rate, 998bm, 270 men, launched 11 June 1794. *Seahorse* had just brought back wounded from the Tenerife action of 20 July 1797, including Captain Nelson, who had lost his right arm. Also returning on board were the diarist Wynne sisters who had been rescued from the French invasion of Italy by the then Captain Thomas Freemantle. Frank served five months as first lieutenant under Captain Edward James Foote, another man with whom he had campaigned in the East Indies. In October Frank and *Seahorse* were at Plymouth when four Spanish prizes from the battle of Cape

St Vincent were brought in. The ship then cruised off the Irish coast and on 16 January 1798 assisted in the capture of *Belliqueuse* (18), a French privateer with 120 men. She was finally broken up at Plymouth in 1819.

14 February 1798 to 2 January 1799: *London* (90), 2nd rate, 1894bm, launched 24 May 1766, crew 738 men. The ship was recommissioned August 1794 for Channel service. *London* was one of a dozen or so British three-deckers of the second rate, smaller than the French and Spanish first rates of over 100 guns. The high decks and relatively short length made them clumsy to handle, although they were cheaper to build. Frank's captain was John Child Purvis, who commanded the ship for four years. Frank was the first lieutenant, and *London* was posted to the Lisbon station and the blockade of Cadiz. After Frank left, the ship served as Sir Hyde Parker's flagship at Nelson's victory at Copenhagen on 2 April 1801, and in November 1807 transported the Portuguese Royal Family into exile in Brazil. She was paid off in June 1809 and broken up at Chatham in April 1811. Frank's career was at last making some headway, thanks to the influence of Admiral Gambier. His performance as first lieutenant of this major capital ship was rewarded with further promotion to the rank of commander, and to his first independent command.

3 January 1799 to 22 October 1800: *Peterel* sloop (16 six pounders, augmented with 8 twelve pound carronades), 365bm, crew of 121, launched 4 March 1794. Frank, now 25, was appointed commander 27 December 1798, and took over the ship at Gibraltar 27 February 1799. During the whole of that year *Peterel* cruised in the western Mediterranean based on Port Mahon, Minorca. She captured numerous vessels coasting along the southern shores of France and Spain, building up her potential for prize money. On 21 March 1800 Frank performed the exploit which earned him his next promotion, fearlessly taking on a group of three French vessels: *La Ligurienne* (14 six pounders and 104 men), *Le Cerf* (14 six pounders and 90 men) and *Le Joillet* (6 six pounders and 50 men). He made the first ship prize and drove the other two ashore. Even more to his credit, his crew had been reduced to 90 men through the detaching of prize crews, and he incurred not a single casualty. In May *Peterel* was active in the blockade of Genoa and then spent the rest of 1800 with Sir Sidney Smith's squadron off Alexandria. A letter Frank sent home dated 8 July detailing visits to Jaffa, Cyprus and Alexandria is an example of how fully he kept those on the domestic front aware of his adventures (*Letters*, 52). On 20 October, on putting in at Rhodes, Frank discovered he had been promoted to post captain as long ago as 13 May, and hence was superseded. He returned to England in the spring of 1801, in time to help with the move of the Austen family from Steventon to Bath. *Peterel* was converted to a receiving ship at Plymouth in 1811 and sold in 1827.

15 September 1801 to 6 October 1802: *Neptune* (98), 2nd rate, 2119 bm, commissioned at Deptford 12 February 1797 and intended for Channel service, crew 738 men. Frank was flag captain to Vice Admiral James Gambier, then third-in-command of the Channel fleet. This was a big step for Frank, going from command of a 16 gun sloop to captain of this three deck behemoth. *Neptune*

divided her time between the home port of Portsmouth and the blockade of Brest. After the Peace of Amiens in April 1802 she became a harbour guard ship and Frank left her when she was paid off in October. *Neptune* was to fight at Trafalgar 21 October 1805. By 1813 she was a prison ship at Plymouth, and she was broken up in 1818.

7 October 1802 to July 1803, during the rest of the Peace of Amiens, and for a few months after, Frank was ashore on half pay.

9 July 1803 to 3 May 1804. Following the resumption of hostilities he remained ashore as a captain of Sea Fencibles. Based at Ramsgate, his responsibility was to organize local sailors and shipping for coastal defense, from North Foreland to Deal. His lack of a sea-going appointment was perhaps because his patron, Admiral Gambier, was absent overseas, from the spring of 1802 until May 1804, serving as Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Newfoundland. While in Ramsgate Frank met Mary Gibson, his future wife.

4 May 1804 –1 February 1805: *Leopard* (50). A small two decker of an obsolete type, being too weak to stand in the line of battle and too unwieldy to compete with a strong frigate, 1044bm, commissioned June 1790, crew of 350 men. Gambier was again a Lord of the Admiralty and this time Frank was flag captain to Thomas Louis (1759-1807, captain 1783), who had been newly promoted to rear admiral. The ship was employed supervising a flotilla of small boats blockading Napoleon's potential invasion fleet, scattered amongst all the French channel ports, but particularly at Boulogne. Home port was Dungeness.

Several years later on the Halifax station, on 22 June 1807, *Leopard* was to be involved in a brief firefight with the USS *Chesapeake*, while searching for British deserters. The vessel was converted to be a troopship in 1811, and finally wrecked in the Gulf of St Lawrence on June 28, 1814.

29 March 1805 – 22 June 1806: *Canopus* (80) 3rd rate, 2257bm, crew of 700 men. This was the renamed French ship *Le Franklin*. Launched at Toulon 22 June 1798, she had been captured at the Nile 1 Aug 1798, and arrived at Plymouth on 17 July 1799. Frank joined on 29 March 1805, and was again flag captain to Admiral Louis. The ship became part of Nelson's Mediterranean fleet. Louis had been one of Nelson's favourite captains since the Nile when Louis, then captain of the *Minotaur* (74), had drawn French fire and saved Nelson's flagship *Vanguard* (74), and Nelson himself, from an even worse battering. *Canopus* missed the battle of Trafalgar 21 October 1805, being part of a detachment sent to replenish water supplies, and then to convoy duty. Nelson had intended this weakening of his force to be an inducement to tempt the French and Spanish fleets to come out and fight, which they did, but without Frank, to his eternal regret.

Following Trafalgar, *Canopus* was assigned to a squadron under Vice Admiral Sir John Duckworth, blockading the remnants of the combined French and Spanish fleets which had taken refuge in Cadiz. On receiving intelligence of French ships out at sea Duckworth raised the blockade and sailed out into the Atlantic. Arriving in the Caribbean on 6 February 1806, he came across five French ships of the line at Santo Domingo and with his seven went in to the attack.

This was Frank Austen's first and only fleet action. His ship had the satisfaction of engaging the largest and finest ship in the French navy, the three decker flagship *Impérial* (120 guns), dismasting her and driving her ashore. In the two hour cannonade two of the enemy were wrecked, and three 72s made prize. Admiral Louis was made a baronet and Frank was awarded a gold medal. The squadron and their prizes were back at Plymouth in May. Frank left *Canopus* on 23 June and married Mary Gibson on 24 July. He was then ashore for nearly a year. His finances were improving, thanks to prize money now paid out for his cruises in the Mediterranean in *Peterel*, and he entered into a partnership in his brother Henry's London bank and army and navy agency, Austen & Co.

Later, in January 1807 Louis and *Canopus*, still in Duckworth's squadron, forced the Dardanelles and appeared before Constantinople. Still in harness, Louis died on board *Canopus* in Alexandria harbour on 17 May 1807. The ship itself had a long and active life, surviving to be sold in 1887, after 89 years afloat.

23 March 1807 to 22 September 1810: *St Albans* (64) 3rd rate, 1380bm, and a crew of 500. Originally commissioned 27 September 1764, this was another obsolete ship, unsuitable for the line and slower than a frigate. Such vessels were used in trade, troop transportation and convoy protection. After her recommissioning in February 1807 Frank was her captain for over three years, performing a variety of tasks. First sailing on 30 June to escort a group of Indiamen to the Cape of Good Hope, he arrived back at Spithead with more merchantmen on 1 January 1808. After a quick turnaround he was sent off in February on a convoy escort to the island of St. Helena, arriving home towards the end of June. In Jane Austen's letters at this time she mentions (*Letters*, pp 131-2, 137-8) how anxious brother Henry was to see him, doubtless on bank business. Again rapidly re-employed, the *St. Albans* was needed to escort a fleet of troop ships to the Portuguese coast, landing reinforcements for Sir Arthur Wellesley on 19 and 20 August 1808, just in time for his victory at Vimeiro on the 21st. Frank's flotilla brought back British wounded and French prisoners, arriving home on 2 September. The ship was then posted to Great Yarmouth for September and October for a well earned refit, accompanied by Frank, who took lodgings in the town to supervise the work.

In January 1809 the *St. Albans*, and Frank, were called back to duty to assist in the evacuation of the British army from Corunna after the death of Sir John Moore. Commodore of the fleet of transports was James Bowen, Frank's old captain from *Prince George* and *Glory*. Jane Austen followed the news closely and commented in a letter to Cassandra on 10 January that 'The S^t Albans perhaps may soon be off to help bring home what may remain by this time of our poor Army, whose state seems dreadfully critical' (*Letters*, 163); on 24 January: 'This is grievous news from Spain' (*Letters*, 171); and on 30 January: 'Thank Heaven! we have had no one to care for particularly among the Troops' (*Letters*, 173).

The ship then received orders for a return visit by Frank to the scene of his earliest adventures – the East Indies. He was required to escort a convoy of the East India Company's ships to Canton, in China, and then to bring them home

again. Setting sail on 5 April 1809, he arrived on 18 September and remained until 2 March 1810. On his return he had the responsibility of protecting thirteen heavily laden Company ships, with cargoes having a total worth of nearly two million sterling. No doubt it was with a great sense of relief that he reached his home waters in July. His three years on the *St Albans*, convoying and freighting, had been devoid of the excitement of combat but were rewarding financially and the grateful East India Company gave him a thousand guinea bonus. After he left the ship, the *St. Albans* sailed on for another couple of years, but was broken up in June 1814.

Frank was superseded at his own request in order to take up his next appointment: a plum piece of patronage engineered on his behalf by his still attentive patron, Admiral Gambier.

19 December 1810 to 13 May 1811: *Caledonia* (120). This was the largest and finest line-of-battle ship yet built in Britain, a three deck 1st rate vessel of 2616bm, a crew of 875 men, and deservedly the pride of the navy. Construction began on 1 January 1805 and the ship was commissioned on 23 September 1808, after more than three years in building. Frank was flag captain to Sir Harry Burrard Neale, Bt., just elevated to rear admiral, and the ship was occupied cruising along the Biscay coast of France. Frank's prestigious appointment lasted just short of five months. The new incoming commander was Sir Edward Pellew, who now wielded more influence than Gambier. He had fallen out of favour, possibly as a result of the contentious Basque Roads affair of 1809, for which he had had to undergo a court martial, or perhaps because his evangelicalism was excessively sanctimonious.

Caledonia continued to be cherished for many years. In June 1856, renamed *Dreadnought*, she was used as a hospital ship for seamen at Greenwich, and was eventually broken up in 1875.

Frank's dismissal worried Jane, who wrote on 20 April 1811: 'Frank is superseded in the *Caledonia*...This is something to think of...what will he do? & where will he live?' (*Letters*, 181). Later on 29 May, she was able to write to Cassandra that Frank and his family were living at Cowes (*Letters*, 188).

9 July 1811 – 7 May 1814: *Elephant* (74) 3rd rate, 1617bm, crew 550 men, first commissioned 7 November 1786. A standard ship of the line, *Elephant* had been Nelson's flagship in his Copenhagen victory of 1801. In July 1811 Frank was appointed to the newly recommissioned ship and was assigned to be part of the North Sea fleet. He spent over a year on a blockade of the Dutch coast, and the protection of domestic shipping.

Towards the end of 1812 he was given a new assignment – commodore of a small detachment: *Elephant* (74), the frigate *Phoebe* (36), and the 6th rate *Hermes* (20), and ordered to cruise the Western Islands (the Azores) to search for American privateers. They had become a menace since the 18 June outbreak of war with the United States. The cruise was a success. On 23 December *Phoebe* took the American privateer *Hunter* (14); and on 28 December *Elephant* and *Hermes* captured the American *Swordfish* (12) after an eleven hour chase of over

a hundred miles. *Elephant* returned to Portsmouth and the responsibility for the sale of Frank's prize was handed over to the family firm of Austen & Co.

Jane Austen was writing *Mansfield Park* at this time (1811-13), and in the book she mentions by name just two of Frank's ships: *Canopus*, near which William Price's *Thrush* may lie at Spithead; and the *Elephant*. It is noteworthy that *Elephant*'s two recent assignments are used as the two potential orders for William's ship: his *Thrush* is either to be sent to the Texel (Dutch coast); or, to 'have a cruise to the westward, with the *Elephant*'.

Frank, once back ashore, took lodgings in Deal with his wife Mary. On 29 January 1813 (*Letters*, 201) Jane Austen reports receiving copies of the just published *Pride and Prejudice* and of sending one to Frank. After a brief respite *Elephant* came under orders again in May, this time to escort convoys and troop transports through the Baltic. The importance of this Northern theatre had grown since Napoleon's disaster in Russia. Frank had trouble all summer with the discipline of his crew, finding them disobedient and neglectful. He attributed their behaviour to habitual drunkenness, and had as many as one in four of the men flogged. This perhaps over-zealous discipline brought him a reprimand from his superiors (Southam, 282-4). Two letters to him in the Baltic from Jane have survived, from July and from September (*Letters*, 214-17, & 229-32).

On May 14 1814 Frank signed off *Elephant* at Spithead and went onto half pay. And that was the end of Frank Austen's involvement in the French wars. He was just forty years old, and had applied for another posting but then withdrew. It may be that the Admiralty's disapproval of his punishment regime would have meant a denial. Meanwhile, the war with Napoleon's France seemed to be over, for Napoleon had abdicated on 11 April, and in May was banished to Elba. Much of the navy was being demobilized. *Elephant* was cut down to the size of a 58 gun 4th rate in 1818, but was never again employed. She was broken up in 1830.

On his retirement Frank with his wife Mary and their five children went to stay at Chawton Great House. His sister Jane, without whom Frank would hardly be remembered, died on 18 July 1817, and Frank attended her funeral in Winchester Cathedral. Mary eventually produced eleven children in a sixteen year span, and died in childbirth on 14 July 1823 at the age of 33. Frank married again at the age of 54 on 24 July 1828. His bride, Martha Lloyd, was 63. In 1830 the inexorable march of seniority made him a rear admiral; in 1837 he became Sir Francis, a Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath; and in 1838 he achieved vice admiral. On 24 January 1843 his wife Martha died, at the age of 77. A period of quiet retirement appeared inevitable.

Then, apparently out of the blue, on 27 December 1844 came a new adventure – at the age of 71, after 30 years on half pay, he was appointed to be commander in chief of the North American and West Indies station. His flagship was the *Vindictive* (74).

December 1844 - May 1848: *Vindictive* (74), 3rd rate. Launched in 1813 but not then employed because of the end of the French wars, this ship was one of the Armada class of battleships, otherwise known as 'the Forty Thieves', because of

all the delays and cost overruns in their construction. Over 40 of these vessels, all built to the same design, were ordered between 1806 and 1812, to assure continued British supremacy at sea. Another ship in the same class was the 74 under construction visited by Jane Austen and her two nephews at Northam on 24 October 1808 (*Letters*, 151). This was the *Conquestador* – the keel had been laid down in October 1807, and the ship was launched on 1 August 1810.

In 1832 *Vindictive* was cut down in size to a 4th rate of 50 guns with a crew of 450. She was readied for sea in 1842, in time for Frank's appointment. During his command the ship had a schedule dictated by the climate. During the hurricane season, from June to October, she visited Halifax, generally remaining in port. On one occasion in 1846 in the late summer she did visit Quebec, where young Midshipman Haig fell overboard and drowned. As the ice closed in, the ship would return to Bermuda for Christmas. From January to April *Vindictive*, with the other ships on station, would cruise the Caribbean, and then return to Bermuda in May. Frank's last few months saw the most action. In February 1848 *Vindictive* visited the port of La Guayra in Venezuela for a little gun boat diplomacy, and Frank travelled overland to Caracas for some hands-on negotiation. Meanwhile he had detached two ships from his command for an expedition to the coast of Nicaragua. On 12 February *Alarm* (26), Captain Granville Gower Loch, and *Vixen* (six-gun steam-powered paddle sloop), Commander George Giffard, with 260 men of the 28th Regiment, attacked and occupied the settlement of Greytown at the mouth of the St Juan river. This gave the British control of the eastern end of a potential route across the Isthmus. In May, Frank's replacement as commander, the Earl of Dundonald, arrived on station. He was the former Lord Cochrane, on whose exploits Jane Austen seems to have based the career of *Persuasion's* Captain Wentworth (Caplan, 2007). Dundonald's flagship was the *Wellesley* (74) which had a most remarkable life. Built of long enduring teak in Bombay and launched in 1815, the ship was renamed *Cornwall* in 1868 and used as a reform school. Her end did not come until 24 September 1940, during the Blitz, when she was sunk in the river Thames by the Luftwaffe.

Vindictive, with Frank on board, arrived home at the end of May 1848. Neither ship nor man was ever employed again. *Vindictive* foundered in 1871. Frank, on returning home, became a full Admiral. In 1860 he was awarded the prestigious Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath, and in 1863 he reached the single most senior rank in the Navy, Admiral of the Fleet. He died at the age of 91, full of honours, on 10 August 1865.

Frank Austen had served in the navy for 77 years. He had sailed in the Channel, the North and Irish Seas, the coastal waters of France, Spain and Portugal, the Baltic, the Mediterranean, the West and East Indies, and China, and the North and South Atlantic. He had served in all manner of ships, from the command of the lowly *Peterel* of 365 tons and a crew of 121, to the magnificent *Caledonia* of 2616 tons and a crew of 875. His sister Jane, with the rest of the Austen family, avidly followed his progress. From this fertile naval background sprang Jane Austen's novels of the navy, *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*. And as for Frank, it was

enough that his memorial tablet in a Wymering parish church carried the simple inscription: 'One of Nelson's Captains'.

Frank's Captains

James Gambier (1756-1833), captain 1788, rear admiral 1795, vice admiral 1799, admiral 1805. A deeply religious man, he distributed evangelical tracts to his men and held compulsory prayer sessions twice a day in his cabin for his officers. His ship *Defence* (74) was noted for the severe battering it received on The Glorious First of June in 1794. He was a Lord of the Admiralty 1795-1801, 1804-6, and 1807-8, deriving his patronage from a family connection to Prime Minister William Pitt. He commanded the Copenhagen expedition of 1807, capturing the Danish fleet, and was rewarded with a barony. He attributed the partial success of his controversial Basque Roads affair in 1809 to Divine intervention. In 1814 he led the British delegation to Ghent which successfully negotiated the peace treaty with the United States. He became Admiral of the Fleet in 1830.

William Cornwallis (1744-1819), captain 1766, rear admiral 1793, admiral 1799. He is best known for his command of the Channel fleet from May 1803 to Feb. 1807, with the close blockade of Brest. This was so successful that Napoleon switched his shipbuilding efforts to Antwerp, which may account for Jane Austen's choice of a name for William Price's ship (Caplan, 2006). Cornwallis was a Member of Parliament from 1778 to 1807.

Isaac Smith (1753-1831), captain 1787, rear admiral 1807. He commanded *Perseverance* for four years on the East India station. He had first gone to sea as a boy with Captain James Cook: to North America (the *Grenville*) and to the Pacific (the *Endeavour*), Cook saying 'he was bred to the sea under my care'. Smith, at the age of 16, had been first ashore at Botany Bay in 1770, Cook saying: 'Isaac, you shall go first'. He was a cousin of Captain Cook's wife.

John Whitby (1775-1806), a fast rising protégé of Cornwallis, had gone out with the East Indies squadron in 1789 as a midshipman. After serving as commander of *Dispatch*, which needed repairs, Cornwallis made Whitby acting captain of *Minerva*, at the age of 19. On returning to England he served as first lieutenant of *Caesar* (80) in the battle of The Glorious First of June in 1794, following which he was made post and served as flag captain to Commodore Cornwallis on *Royal Sovereign* (100).

Josias Rowley (1765-1842), captain 6 April 1795. In 1805 Rowley took part in the Cape of Good Hope expedition, under Commodore Sir Home Popham, as captain of *Raisonable* (64), and later, 1808-1810, was commodore of the fleet that captured the islands of Bourbon and Mauritius. He was made a baronet on 2 November 1813, became C-in-C Ireland from 1818 to 1821, and was a Member of Parliament from 1821 to 1826.

William Ogilvy (1763-1823). He gained promotion to be commander of *Lark* by his performance as first lieutenant of *Glory* (98) at the battle of The Glorious First of June, 1794. He was made a post captain in 1797. He became the eighth Baronet Ogilvy in 1819, and a rear admiral in 1821.

James Bowen (1751-1835), had quite a story. At the age of 43, in 1794, he gave up a lucrative job on shore with the Navy Board to sail with Lord Howe, and was given a warrant to be master of the *Queen Charlotte* (100 guns), Howe's flagship in the Channel Fleet. Distinguishing himself during the battle of The Glorious First of June, 1794, he was immediately commissioned as a lieutenant by Howe, and within a year successively raised to commander and then to post captain. A shining example of what patronage could do to reward an exceptionally deserving man. He became an admiral in 1825.

Alexander Fraser (1751-1830), captain 1793, commander Dundee Sea Fencibles 1810, rear admiral 1811.

John Gore (1772-1836), captain 1794, knighted 1805, rear admiral 1813. Gore became obscenely rich, capturing Spanish treasure ships not once but twice – in 1799 in *Triton*, and in *Medusa* in 1804 – and netting no less than £55,000.

Edward James Foote (1767-1833) captain 1794. Both he and Frank had been part of the East Indies expedition of 1789-1793. On returning home Foote married his first wife, Nina. He took part in the battle of Cape St Vincent in *Niger* in 1797. He divorced Nina in 1803 and married Mary Patton, inspiring Mr Leigh-Perrot's epigram ending: 'Nor the Foot find the Patten a Clog' (*Letters*, p. 524). On 2 January 1807 he dined with the Austens at their new Southampton home: 'Good humoured and pleasant' (*Letters*, 115). In February 1807 Jane Austen entertained Catherine, his 10 year old daughter (*Letters*, 119). Rear admiral 1812. In 1814 Jane recorded his comments on *Mansfield Park*: 'surprised that I had the power of drawing the Portsmouth Scenes so well'.

John Child Purvis (1747-1825), gained his captaincy in 1782 during the War of American Independence, rear admiral 1804, vice admiral 1808. He commanded the blockade of Cadiz 1806-10, and became a full admiral in 1819.

Note: The exact dates given for Frank Austen's comings and goings, to and from his various ships, are from Frank himself, from a document he submitted to the Admiralty on the occasion of the award of his CB in 1815 (The National Archives, ADM. 196/68/145).

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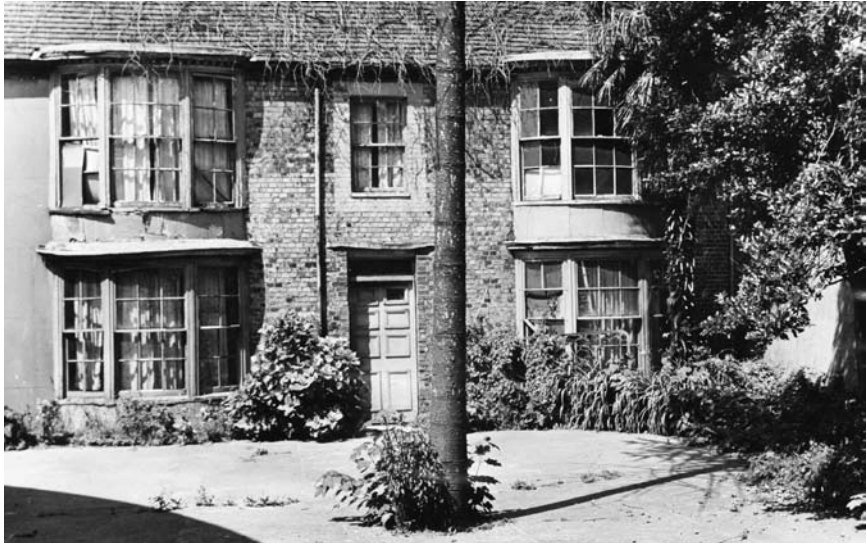
Jane Austen and Worthing

Janet Clarke

Introduction

Jane Austen's association with Worthing in Sussex is perhaps the most important yet least known of all the town's literary links. Only in 1989 was it first discovered that the young novelist had spent the season of 1805 in this newly fashionable seaside resort. Fascinating details of Jane's visit were found recorded in the diary of her 12 year-old niece Fanny Knight, whose brief but vital account has now opened for us, some 200 years later, a uniquely exciting window onto a previously hidden period in the famous author's life.

In 2005, researcher Francis Short identified Jane Austen's Worthing residence as having been 'Stanford Cottage', happily one of the town's few historic buildings to remain standing.¹ The attractive property still retains today much of its original exterior character and charm, though regretfully the interior has been gutted and the garden largely lost. It now houses a pizza restaurant. 'Stanford Cottage', situated in Stanford Square, off Warwick Street in the heart of the town, is described by historian Robert Ellery as 'a late eighteenth-century double fronted mansard-roofed house with bow windows facing the sea with a small courtyard on the north side'.² The property was named after Edward Stanford, a local tailor, hatter and piano dealer; his occupation suggests that there may well have been a piano in the house, allowing Jane Austen to continue the daily morning practice she so enjoyed at home. Looking up at the delightful southern aspect of Stanford Cottage today, we can picture the young novelist at one of the sunny windows, absorbed in her reading or writing, pausing from time to time to gaze out across the open fields towards the sparkling sea beyond. Who knows what inspiration for her future works she may have gained here?



Stanford Cottage

Background to Jane Austen's visit

The year 1805 was to prove an important turning point, both for the nation as a whole and for the Austen family in particular. On 21 January, after a brief illness, Jane's beloved father, the Revd George Austen, having retired from Steventon only five years earlier, died unexpectedly at their home in Bath. His sudden death and the family's subsequent loss of income plunged Mrs Austen and her unmarried daughters, Jane aged 29 and Cassandra 32, into something of a financial crisis; the ladies' plight, however, was soon alleviated by the five dutiful Austen sons who, being now well established in life themselves, were able to pledge an annual sum sufficient for their womenfolk's everyday needs. Nevertheless, Bath would prove far too expensive.

Further change occurred in Jane's household that year when Martha Lloyd, now also alone, came to live with Mrs Austen and her daughters in Bath. It was this party of four ladies who, later in June that year, set off from the city to visit Edward Austen in Kent. Edward, or 'Neddy' as he was known, had had the good fortune of being adopted earlier in his youth by a wealthy but childless relative, Thomas Knight, and later inherited large estates both Godmersham in Kent, and at Steventon and Chawton in Hampshire. Jane and Cassandra were popular aunts to Edward's growing number of children, but it was his eldest daughter Fanny who in particular enjoyed a special rapport with her lively and congenial Aunt Jane. Fanny's newly appointed governess, Ann Sharp, was also proving a popular figure in the household and would herself become a lifelong friend of Jane Austen. It was this convivial group, comprising Fanny, her parents, governess, grandmother, Aunts Jane and Cassandra and Martha Lloyd, who gathered together that September for the first time on the Sussex coast.

At that time in 1805, Jane Austen was a budding but as yet unpublished novelist, whose creative genius was fired by her perceptive observations of everyday life. The author's forthcoming stay in Worthing would provide a new and interesting environment for her, inspiring many scenes, characters and themes found in her final novel, *Sanditon*. Begun in January 1817, following the publication of *Emma* the previous year, this was to be the story of an up and coming seaside resort in Sussex. According to the eminent Jane Austen scholar Deirdre Le Faye, *Sanditon* was 'evidently going to be a long and wickedly comical tale concerning a group of seaside residents, some hopeful, some foolish, some cunning, but all interested in making money by developing their little local fishing village into a smart holiday resort'.³ Regrettably, only twelve sparkling chapters were written before Jane Austen's untimely death, six months later. Nevertheless, the surviving precious fragment provides us with not only the tantalizing framework of a brilliant new novel, but also a fascinating insight into the Sussex Jane Austen experienced at the beginning of the 19th century.

Early Worthing and *Sanditon*



Seafront, 1800

The story of *Sanditon* opens with the scene of a coach overturning on a rough winding track in Sussex, causing one of its occupants, Mr Parker, to suffer a sprained ankle. Such a scenario would have been only too commonplace at the end of the 18th century, when the primitive lanes of Sussex were notoriously hazardous. Matters improved somewhat in 1804 with the opening of a turnpike road from West Grinstead via Washington, which facilitated a daily coach service between London and Worthing. This in turn led to an increase in visitor numbers. The Worthing guide of 1805 informs us that on certain days the coach left London from Gracechurch Street, coincidentally the address of the Gardiners in *Pride and Prejudice*. It seems possible, therefore, that it was Worthing's guide which may have first drawn Jane Austen's attention to this rather lovely name.

Like the future Parkers of *Sanditon*, Jane Austen and her relatives, in the autumn of 1805, made the none too easy journey from Kent along the twisting country lanes to the Sussex coast. First stopping at Battle, they spent the night of 17 September at Horsebridge near Hailsham, before proceeding to Brighton for a

few hours' sightseeing; from there they continued westwards towards their final destination.⁴ Worthing's landscape, with its flat terrain in front of the Downs, must have appeared in sharp contrast to that of steeply hilled Lyme Regis, the ancient port in Dorset where they had holidayed the year before.

The new resort of Worthing had started taking shape towards the end of the 18th century, when such coastal locations were becoming associated with better health. Fields surrounding the tiny fishing hamlet were suddenly seen in a new light, as prime sites for marine mansions and elegant terraces; everywhere it seemed building works were at full stretch, struggling to keep up with the ever-growing demand for more accommodation. Older inhabitants of Worthing must have viewed with astonishment the swift transformation of the former humble landscape. Importantly for its future success, 1798 saw Worthing play host to Princess Amelia, the youngest daughter of George III, whose doctors had recommended a 'sea cure' for her troublesome knee complaint. So successful was the 5-month royal visit that Worthing's new-found status and reputation were secured. Visitors from the highest circles soon flocked to the town, eager to follow in the Princess's footsteps. Five years later in 1803, only two years before Jane Austen's visit, Worthing officially became a town in its own right, having gained by act of parliament its civic independence from the mother parish of Broadwater. The newly appointed Board of Commissioners, then serving a population of just over 1,000, set out at once to 'drain the town, purchase a fire engine, establish a police force and construct properly paved, lit and cleansed streets'.⁵ Modernisation plans included the laying of an open brick drain through High Street, Warwick Street and South Street, for the final disgorging of its contents onto the shore. Worthing's magnificent beach, the jewel in its crown, suffered a further blight at times when stormy seas dredged up and deposited vast banks of seaweed onto the tideline. The resulting rotting vegetation produced a stench which pervaded the seafront, spoiling the atmosphere, until the problem was removed by high tides or manual labour. The autumn storms of 1805 must have been particularly severe, for the seaweed problem was recorded for the first time as 'rendering the town disagreeable, causing distress'.⁶ Jane Austen herself must have experienced this phenomenon, for her description in *Sanditon* of 'the constant effluvia of a ridge of putrifying seaweed' is perfectly accurate to those of us today who have witnessed the very same scene.

Undeterred, however, visitors continued to flock into the new resort, turning their backs on the inland spas, in favour of a stay at the seaside. Worthing's new civic status, its notably mild climate and safe bathing, helped it become the early 19th-century's newly acclaimed tourist hotspot. Public confidence in the town increased still further in 1803 with the appointment of the first beadle, town crier and rate-collector. Ambitious entrepreneurs, builders and tradesmen all pulled together, united in the task of making Worthing a premier resort, perhaps even one to rival Brighton. By 1805, especially for visitors of a quieter disposition, Worthing was definitely the place to be. *Sanditon*'s Mr Parker may well be expressing the same pride and excitement which Jane Austen herself had observed

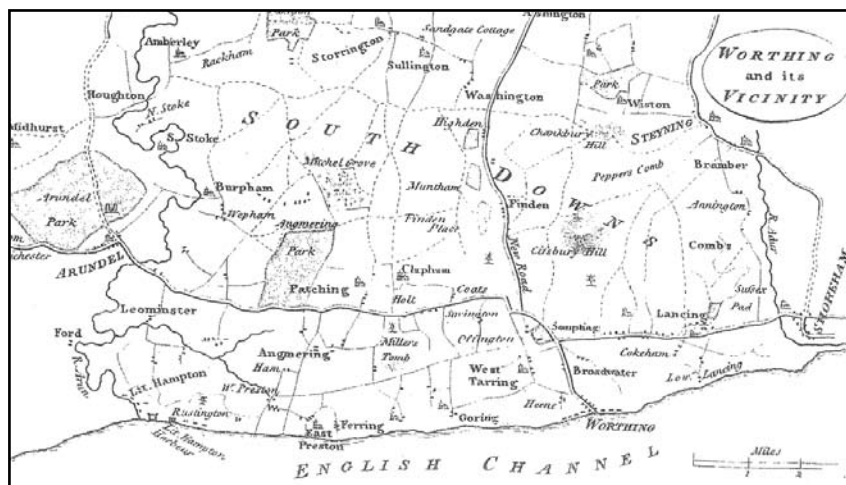
in the townsfolk at this time. In the story he declares his resort to be ‘the favourite – for a young and rising bathing place – certainly the favourite spot of all that are to be found along the coast of Sussex, the most favoured by nature, and promising to be the most chosen by man!’

By 1805 Worthing’s population was approaching 2,500, and its growing number of shops were ‘filled with articles well assorted for the family and of the best quality of nearly every description’.⁷ Private banks were being established, as were medical practices like that of Worthing’s highly respected surgeon Mr Morah. Good medical services like his were vital to the success of any resort, as Jane Austen reflects in the opening chapters of *Sanditon*, where we discover that the very purpose of Mr Parker’s journey is to secure a good surgeon for his own aspiring bathing place.

As Worthing continued to develop and expand, it faced an ever escalating demand for fuel, which was met by deliveries of coal from Newcastle, aboard ‘small sturdy flat bottomed vessels called ‘Geordies’. Then a common sight at sea, Geordies were run ashore at high tide for their cargo to be unloaded by horse and cart’.⁸

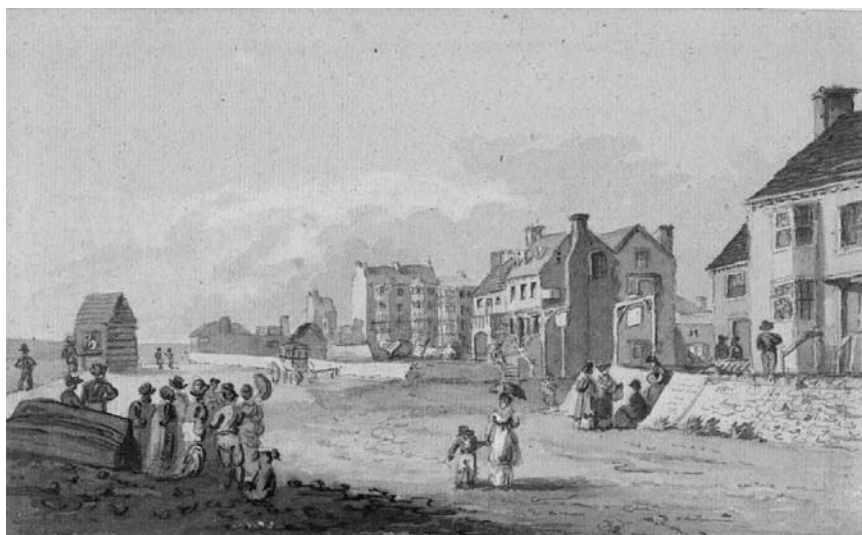
Jane Austen arrives in Worthing

Like all visitors in 1805, the Austens’ carriage would have approached Worthing via the ancient village of Broadwater, whose Norman church of St Mary still incorporated the expanding resort within its own ecclesiastical boundaries. Local villagers had long felt the effects of their neighbour’s growing fame, not only from the increasing volume of traffic on the road but also from the higher numbers attending church, and the welcome creation of new employment opportunities. Indeed, enterprising locals were quick to respond to the shortage of accommodation in the area, by offering visitors bed and breakfast in their own



The Revd John Evans, Worthing and its vicinity, 1805

homes. One is reminded of this when Jane Austen writes in *Sanditon*, ‘the original village contained little more than cottages ... and two or three of the best of them were smartened up with a white curtain and “Lodgings to Let”’. Leaving Broadwater, the final mile of their journey took the Austens along Brooksteed Lane (today’s South Farm Road) before turning eastwards along North Street, High Street and to the heart of the town. On approach they would have noticed two large barns, one housing a barracks and one, close to today’s Swan Inn, which served as a venue for theatrical performances. The popularity of this latter Barn Theatre, since its opening in 1803, led to Worthing’s first purpose-built theatre, the Theatre Royal, which opened in Ann Street in 1807. Jane Austen herself had enjoyed and participated in family amateur dramatics in her youth at home in Steventon, but as to whether she attended any productions staged at The Barn, we can only speculate.



The Steyne, Worthing, 1808

Proceeding along the High Street, the Austen family would have next observed the stabling and blacksmithing centre which had become established between Ann Street and what is now Chatsworth Road. Ahead of them emerged the imposing features of Warwick House, the town’s first impressive marine residence. Situated on the eastern corner of High Street, opposite today’s Steyne Gardens, this attractive yellow brick and flint mansion had been built between 1750 and 1760 for the renowned London gambler John Luther, who subsequently sold it in 1789 to the Earl of Warwick. No doubt the Austens would come to hear how Luther ‘was reputed to have lost £100,000 at one throw of the dice, but only paid half his debt’.⁹ Warwick House, like the future fictional Sanditon House, was set in its own grounds bordered by mature trees. On the opposite north-west corner of High Street stood The Colonnade circulating library, ‘a

unified graceful building with an attractive curved arcade, decorated with cast iron ballustrades running round the raised ground floor and approached at each end by steps'.¹⁰ The town's first guide, *A Picture of Worthing*, published earlier in 1805 and written by the Revd John Evans, commends the quality of books to be found at the Colonnade Library. Indeed, Evans notes that he, 'aware of the usual trash of circulating libraries was pleasingly disappointed in finding so many volumes worthy of attention'.¹¹ It is intriguing to find Jane Austen echoing Evans's very words in *Sanditon* when Sir Edward remarks, 'the mere *trash of the circulating library* I hold in the highest contempt'. Was Jane also remembering the Colonnade librarian Mrs Spooner when depicting Sanditon's librarian Mrs Whitby, 'sitting in her inner room reading one of her novels'?



Worthing, the Colonnade Library

Opposite the Colonnade, nearing completion, stood the new, elegant Steyne Terrace, whose creamy yellow brick work was made from local blue clay dredged up from the sea shore. Turning west, the Austens' carriage would have finally drawn to a halt halfway down Warwick Street, outside Stanford Cottage, their home for the next few months. Fanny's diary records that they arrived 'at 5pm on Wednesday 18 September 1805', and 'that they walked on the Sands in the evening'. This typical scene of the time is portrayed by Evans in *A Picture of Worthing*, where he writes: 'every evening during the season, it is a gratifying sight to behold the company of both sexes parading the Sands with countenances devoid of care and expressive of rational satisfaction'.¹² No doubt visitors then, like those of today, enjoyed not only the fresh air and exercise, but also the opportunity to see and be seen.

Next to the Austens' residence stood the more substantial and grander property known as Bedford House (now demolished), where Princess Amelia allegedly resided for part of her stay in 1798. The magazine *Worthing Parade* (1955)

records that ‘one account of the time stated that she [the Princess] stayed first at numbers 2 to 6 Montague Place and later at Bedford House in Bedford Row’.¹³ Having such an illustrious neighbour must surely have enhanced the status of Stanford Cottage itself in the eyes of future prospective tenants. But even without the royal connection, the Austens’ holiday home had much to commend it, being in a highly desirable area in the town centre, close to all amenities. A short walk westerly along Warwick Street led to the busy thoroughfare of South Street, with its shopping parade, coach ticket offices, and Nelson Inn. At the beach end of South Street, on opposite corners, stood a further two inns, one the Sea Hotel, with its own stables and coach houses, the other the New Inn. Both establishments were run by widows whose names were displayed outside on signs which almost touched each other across the street. Amusingly, one was a Mrs Hogsflesh, the other a Mrs Bacon! The comedy of this would surely have appealed to Jane Austen and her family. One wonders if these names might have appeared later in future chapters of *Sanditon*. Turning west from South Street into Montague Street, the land to the north was still at that time given over to pasture for cattle, while to the south, the terraces of Montague Place built in 1794, and Bath Place in 1800 faced one another. Separating them was a large paddock and lawn belonging to Summer Lodge, the substantial detached residence of tea merchant Mr Stringer. Curiously, we find a Mr Stringer in *Sanditon*, but there he is a greengrocer.

Worthing Society

1805 became a boom year for Worthing, as society in ever increasing numbers came to sample the latest health resort to be patronised by royalty. *A Picture of Worthing* records that ‘Lord and Lady Melville, together with the Hon. Henry Addington and his Lady are to be ranked among its vistsors, and many noblemen and gentlemen with their families reside here during the summer months’.¹⁴ Indeed, by August, so great was the influx of visitors that Worthing’s hotel and inns could barely cope, forcing some prospective guests to turn round and head for Brighton instead. Those with social connections in the town, however, were always at an advantage. Personal contacts were often the key to securing both favourable accommodation and introductions into local society. We find this reflected in *Sanditon* when Miss Parker refers to ‘a letter of recommendation and introduction to me of the lady from Camberwell’; similarly, another passage reads, ‘Mrs Griffiths, being a stranger at Sanditon, was anxious for a respectable introduction’. It seems that the Austens, though newcomers themselves, may already have had friends in Worthing, for Fanny’s diary indicates that they were visiting, dining and walking with a Miss Fielding and the Johnsons from the very first day of their arrival. Miss Fielding may possibly have been a relation of the Aunt Fielding from Margate whom Jane in a letter mentioned meeting some years earlier at Goodnestone in Kent.

The good social standing of a new resort like Worthing was crucial in attracting the right sort of visitors, for whom compatible company was a top priority. Importantly, for single young ladies and gentlemen, the holiday season presented

opportunities for meeting new members of the opposite sex. For this reason, parents often chose with care a resort which offered the best prospects. Aware of this, Jane Austen amusingly portrays Mr Parker's excitement as he happily anticipates the benefit to Sanditon of a visit by his own eligible younger brother, 'a clever young man and with great powers of pleasing ... with his neat equipage and fashionable air. Many a respectable family, many a careful mother, many a pretty daughter might it secure us to the prejudice of Eastbourne and Hastings.'

'From the land fullness, from the sea health'

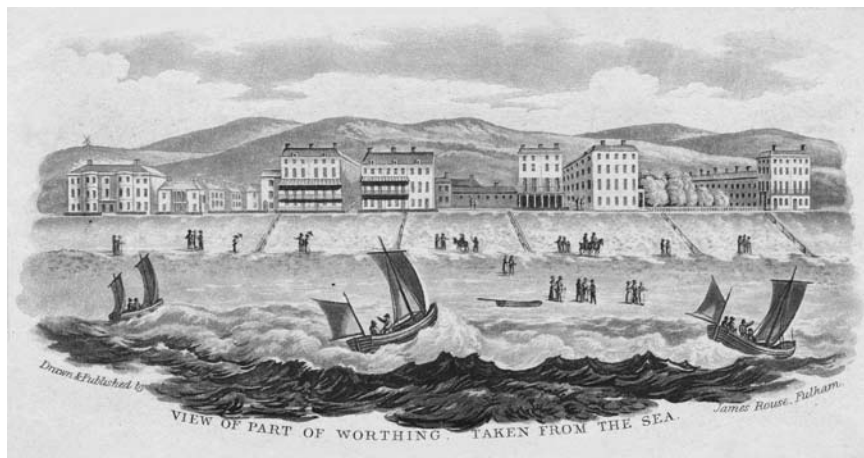
Worthing's present-day motto, denoting its health-giving environment, would have been equally appropriate in 1805. The town's then bountiful supply of fresh seafood at reasonable cost must have delighted Jane Austen, who found Southampton's fish to be 'stinking', and that of Bath 'exorbitant'. *A Picture of Worthing* describes with relish the mouth-watering sea-harvest waiting to be enjoyed by visitors. Evans states: 'the beautiful silver mackrael and shrimps are of a very fine flavour, and when eaten almost immediately after they are taken out of the sea, they may be reckoned a real delicacy. Lobsters and crabs are caught here, they are exceedingly fresh and of course, highly pleasant to the taste'.¹⁵ It is no wonder then that on their first day in Worthing Fanny records: 'I went with G[rand]-mama in the morning to buy fish on the Beach'. Like them, we too in the 21st century continue to enjoy the same pleasure of purchasing freshly landed catch directly from fishermen on Worthing's shore.

Equally important in those days was a reliable source of meat and other fresh produce essential for visitors' fine dining. Again Evans assures visitors of finding an 'adequate supply of beef, veal, pork, South Down mutton, lamb, and poultry of all kinds on reasonable terms. Nor must we forget the Wheatears, called by some the English Ortolons (a small migratory bird) a choice delicacy and which abound in this part of the country. Here are also vegetables in all sorts in profusion. Springs are numerous throughout the town and pumps supply every house with good water.'¹⁶

Sea bathing

The highlight of a seaside holiday has always surely been a swim in the sea, which in 1805 was still a relatively new leisure activity. Fanny's diary tells us that after buying fish on their first morning, she lost no time in going 'with Mama and Miss Sharpe to Bathe, where I had a most delicious dip'. Like her niece, Jane Austen herself also enjoyed sea bathing. Only the year before she had written to Cassandra from Lyme Regis: 'the bathing was delightful this morning and Molly so pressing with me to enjoy myself that I believe I staid in rather too long'.¹⁷ Before the days of swimming costumes, ladies often wore a simple shift for their dip, while men sometimes plunged in naked, from the side of a boat.¹⁸ Following the customary practice of the day, Jane would have hired from Worthing's beach one of the usual 'bathing machines', available at a cost of 'one shilling per adult, or sixpence per child, to include towels'.¹⁹ These simple wooden huts on wheels

provided occupants with privacy for changing, while trundling them by horse or man-power out to sea. At the required depth, the client would ceremoniously descend the steps into the waters beneath. Medical opinion of the day held the most efficacious time for bathing to be early in the morning, when the sea was coldest and the pores closed.



Worthing Beach and Seafront

To help the more reluctant bathers, attendants known as ‘dippers’ were on hand to duck their clients firmly beneath the icy waves without further ado. Evans tells us that there were approximately 30 bathing machines on Worthing beach, which were ‘used apart from each other for both sexes, therefore every proper attention is paid to decency’.²⁰ Nerves and trepidation however must have caused many on the brink of their first sea dip to hesitate before taking the plunge. This was something Jane Austen had clearly observed, for in *Sanditon* Diana Parker offers moral support to a timid Miss Lamb because, as she says, ‘she is so frightened poor thing that I promised to come and keep up her spirits and go in the machine with her if she wished’. To guarantee complete privacy, one could also hire at extra cost, a bathing machine equipped with a ‘modesty hood’, which provided a cover over the sea, concealing the swimmer inside. Some may have regarded this innovation as particularly necessary to counteract the nuisance of prying eyes trained on swimmers from the shore. Indeed, in 1805 it was recorded that young men of Worthing had been advised to ‘recollect the delicacy that is due to the female sex and instead of lounging upon the beach and indulging in unpleasant observations, to direct their attention to amusements more manly and becoming’.²¹ No doubt the use of telescopes exacerbated the problem.

Since 1797, Worthing had offered visitors the added luxury of indoor heated baths, built by John Wickes in honour of Princess Amelia’s stay. Situated on the corner of today’s Bath Place, the ‘small, single-storied’ wooden building was

supplied with water pumped from the sea, and heated to the required temperature.²² The cost was a princely 3/6d. We know that Cassandra Austen must have been eager to indulge in the delights of Mr Wickes's establishment, for Fanny's diary entry for Friday 20 September reads: 'Mama and I sat some time with Miss Fielding and I afterwards waited on the Sands for Aunt Cassandra coming out of the warm bath'. We can only guess whether Jane Austen later followed her sister's example.

The Sea-cure

Since the middle of the 18th century, older seaside towns such as Weymouth and Brighton had been attracting the rich and famous away from traditional inland spas, in fresh pursuit of that ever elusive 'cure-all'. No doubt the good food, fresh air and exercise enjoyed on the coast generally saw them return home in much better health. Observing this improvement in their patients' well being, doctors began prescribing sea water itself as a general medicine, for both internal and external use. Twelve years later in 1817 however, when Jane Austen was writing *Sanditon*, it seems she had long since seen through the myth of the healing powers of the sea. Understanding its commercial power, however, she amusingly portrays Mr Parker as perhaps a typical entrepreneur of the time, eager to promote the idea of a miraculous sea-cure. He declares of Sanditon: 'the sea air and sea bathing together were nearly infallible, one or other of them being a match for every disorder of the stomach, the lungs or the blood. They were anti-sceptic, anti-billious and anti-rheumatic. If the sea-breeze failed, the sea-bath was the certain corrective, and where bathing disagreed, the sea air alone was evidently designed by nature for the cure.' Perhaps Jane Austen was mocking this misplaced confidence, for at the time of writing she was only too well aware of her own inexorable decline; all medical treatments had failed and her prognosis was bleak.

Seaside attractions

From the 18th century, seafronts have always been associated with light-hearted fun and entertainment. At the time of Jane Austen's visit, Worthing had yet to build its more formal promenade, but fun and games took place on the sands. These included Punch and Judy, pony rides, donkey races and cricket matches. From time to time itinerant pedlars, jugglers, magicians and Romany fortune-tellers arrived to bring further colour to the holiday scene. Travelling fairs and circuses also occasionally stopped by, the latter comprising mainly equestrian acts. These depicted such scenes as Dick Turpin riding to York, and were supported by clowns and tumblers. One can imagine the laughter, thrill and amazement brought to the early seaside audience.

The Marine Library

Prior to 1807 Worthing had yet to build its first assembly rooms, so many of the town's social functions took place in the Marine Library on the seafront. Situated

west of the Steyne, on the site of today's Stagecoach office, this important establishment first opened in 1797; it was run by a Mr Stafford, who stocked both a good supply of books and the popular London newspapers. Libraries at this time often had an adjoining coffee room, where prints and squibs (topical cartoons) were enjoyed, and where souvenirs etc could be purchased. Perhaps we learn in *Sanditon* what Jane Austen herself had found for sale at the Marine Library, when we read that Charlotte goes to buy 'new parasols and gloves and new broaches for her sisters and herself at the library'. Similarly, people-watching at Worthing's libraries may also have inspired the creation of the character Mr Parker, who 'could not be satisfied without an early visit to the library and the library subscription book'. He, like others with an eye to business, could gauge the resort's likely fortunes from the names appearing daily on the library's new subscribers' list. The wealthier and more numerous the clientele, the more prosperous the town.

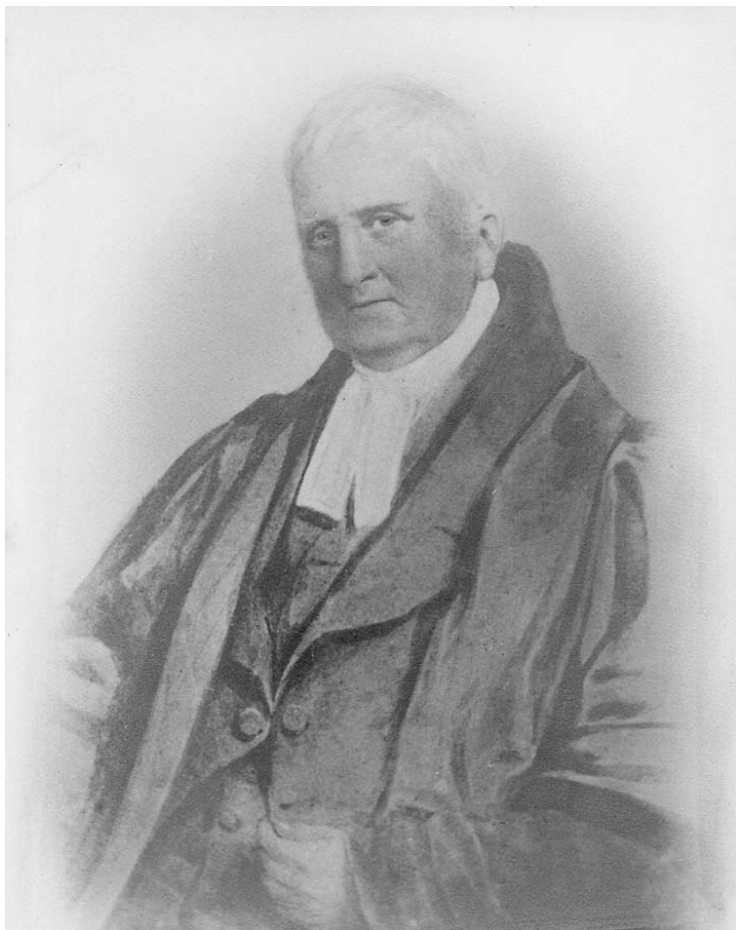
In 1805 the Marine Library also served as Worthing's Post Office. Incoming mail was delivered there by post-boy from Shoreham at 11am, the outgoing post being dispatched at 3pm. Postage stamps were not yet in use, the cost of 1d being charged to the recipient. Jane Austen, herself a prolific correspondent, must have written a number of letters during her stay in Worthing, though none has yet come to light.

As night fell the Marine Library opened its doors once more, this time for music, cards and dancing. It may have been here that Jane enjoyed the particular good fortune which Fanny recorded in her diary on Thursday 19 September. She wrote, 'We dined at 4pm and went to a Raffle in the evening where Aunt Jane won and it amounted to 17s'. Although we do not know what Jane's raffle involved, it is interesting to note that besides being a lucky draw, a 'raffle' was also the name of an old dicing game, in which the stakes went to the thrower of a 'pair royal' i.e. three dice (or cards) of the same denomination all falling alike.²³ What we can be sure of, however, is that Jane's considerable winnings (£34 in today's values) would have come as a welcome boost to her modest holiday funds; she may have been expressing her own youthful thoughts when Lady Denham of Sanditon states, 'Young ladies that have no money are very much to be pitied'.

Church

In an era when the 'Lord's day' was still generally observed, Worthing's shops and businesses would have remained closed on Sundays, when worship, rest and quiet recreation were the order of the day. Fanny's diary for Sunday 22 September reads: 'Morning Church. Miss Lloyd, Gmama and Aunt Jane went to church'. Worshippers had to make the journey of about a mile to St Mary's Church in Broadwater, described in *A Picture of Worthing* as 'a pleasant walk through fields in fine weather'.²⁴ The rector of Broadwater in 1805 was the Revd Peter Wood, 'a respected and popular figure in the social life of Worthing', who continued as rector until his death in 1853.²⁵ He may well have got to know Jane Austen and her party, from their being regular members of his congregation. Church attendance was the norm for Jane as a clergyman's daughter, but the upper classes

in general at that time had also been noted for returning to church. This may have been in reaction to the horrific events befalling their social counterparts across the Channel in Post-Revolution France. Whatever the reason, the *Annual Register* of 1798 recorded: 'it was a wonder to the lower orders, throughout all parts of England, to see the avenues to the churches filled with carriages. This novel appearance prompted the simple country people to enquire what the matter was!'²⁵



The Revd Peter Wood (Courtesy of Worthing Museum and Art Gallery)

Non-conformists, including Methodists and Congregationalists, were also increasing in number, and by 1805 a small independent chapel had opened on the corner of Montague Street and Portland Road, where Boots is today. This was also the era of William Wilberforce and the campaign to abolish the transatlantic slave trade, which finally succeeded in 1807.

Excursions

On Monday 23 September, Jane Austen waved goodbye to her niece Fanny, who set off with her parents and governess for their return journey to Kent. Stanford Cottage must have seemed very quiet without the lively young company, but no doubt the remaining four ladies soon established a new routine, with the happy prospect ahead of exploring the Worthing area more fully.

Walking was a favourite form of exercise for Jane Austen, who once described herself as ‘a desperate walker’. She no doubt revelled in the fresh air and took an interest of Worthing’s unfamiliar coastal and inland footpaths. For a more novel way to appreciate this stretch of coast, however, *A Picture of Worthing* recommended an ‘aquatic excursion’, aboard one of the pleasure boats available for hire from the beach. At a cost of a few shillings, the trips were considered well worthwhile, for ‘at the distance of three or four miles on the sea, Worthing appears to advantage, its new buildings glisten to the eye – whilst backed by wooded and variagated country, the imagination is at once delighted and refreshed’.²⁶

Saddle horses and chaises could be hired from the two inns in South Street for visits to beauty spots such as Cissbury and Chankbury Hills. Their stunning scenery and magnificent views made them the perfect spot for picnic parties like the one so famously portrayed in *Emma*. With the Napoleonic wars then ongoing, and the threat of invasion ever present, Chankbury Hill offered visitors the added interest of a beacon at its summit, attended by soldiers whose role was ‘with glasses to keep watch over the approach of the enemy, and in case of actual danger, to fire the beacon’.²⁷



Muntham



William Frankland of Muntham (reproduced by kind permission of the Worthing Herald)

Not far from Chankbury, another favourite tourist destination was Muntham, the extensive estate of well known natural philosopher, explorer, and former Sheriff of Sussex, William Frankland. Today we know it as the location of Worthing's Crematorium, ideally situated in the original magnificently wooded grounds. Apart from its notable architecture and scenic setting, Muntham's main attraction for visitors then was its large display of fascinating artefacts, gathered by Frankland from his travels around the world. Also on show were Frankland's own original inventions of both clever and curious design. We are given some idea of the scale of things from the following description: 'one room of the house was full of lathes, capable of producing anything from a wooden block for hand carving to the most intricate wooden medals. Other areas were set aside for clocks, watches, printing apparatus, musical instruments and machines to

generate electricity and optical aides of every description. A place was allotted for agricultural implements, and a small cloth factory produced items such as floor coverings, sheets and clothing for the house'.²⁸ Visitors must have been enthralled by Frankland's exhibition. Indeed, Muntham became such an attraction that drivers of the London to Worthing coaches always pointed it out to their passengers as they sped by. A striking similarity exists between William Frankland of Muntham and Jane Austen's Mr Dashwood senior, whose death sets the story of *Sense and Sensibility* in motion. Like Frankland, Mr Dashwood was also the wealthy owner of a great estate in Sussex, where he too was highly esteemed in the local community. Both gentlemen similarly remained unmarried, lived to a great age and left the bulk of their estates to a nephew called Henry. Significantly, the death of William Frankland occurred in late December 1805 while Jane Austen was probably still in Worthing. Speculation about this eminent man's will and the future of the Muntham estate must have quickly become the talk of the town, no doubt engaging the particular attention of the younger Miss Austen. When later revising *Sense and Sensibility* prior to publication in 1811, could it be that the novelist incorporated aspects of Frankland of Muntham into the character of old Mr Dashwood of Norland Park? It is tempting to think so.

Other local places of interest on the early tourist map included the historic villages of Salvington and Tarring. The former was noted for being the birthplace of 17th-century writer and philosopher John Selden, while the latter's fame lay in its 13th-century Old Palace and fig garden, reputedly linked to Thomas À Becket. At the time of Jane Austen's visit, the fig trees of Tarring numbered more than one hundred, and yielded abundant crops of ripe plump fruits in summer, relished by residents and visitors alike. No doubt the Austens would have enjoyed not only eating the delicious local figs but also learning of their fascinating origins. A few of Tarring's fig trees happily remain to this day.

Journeying a mile or two further west brought the visitor to the ancient coastal village of Goring, commended in *A Picture of Worthing* for its 'Church with a spire' and 'a pretty house'. Today the 'Court House', sitting prettily in front of St Mary's, continues to please our modern eye, enhancing the heart of this now widely developed area. Rising up gently behind Goring, Highdown Hill offered visitors then as now, panoramic and breathtaking views over both the English Channel and the scenic Sussex Downs. In 1793, the climb to the top was made all the more interesting by the unusual erection of a large stone tomb built in accordance with the wishes of one recently deceased John Olliver. Legend has it that Olliver, the eccentric miller and poet of Highdown, was buried upside down 'so that when the world was turned upside down on the Day of Judgement he would be the only person who met his Maker standing upright!'.²⁹ From Goring, one could return to Worthing through the village of Heene, which, though then much depleted in size, still retained its landmark windmill and a naval signal-post. Had the enemy ever been sighted, the signal would have been passed along the coast, and plans implemented for the immediate evacuation of people and livestock inland, to places of safety.

Rumours

Family life is rarely all plain sailing, and for the Austens it was no different. It seems even the tranquility of the ladies' stay in Worthing may have been affected by the arrival of unwelcome rumours in the town that year, concerning one of their very own relatives. Mrs Jane Leigh Perrot, sister in law to Mrs Austen and aunt to Jane and Cassandra, had become the subject of some very unfortunate gossip in the neighbourhood. Not for the first time however, were the Austens subject to distress and embarrassment on her account, for eight years earlier, in 1797, Mrs Leigh Perrot, a respectable member of Bath society, had been arrested and charged with stealing lace from a city shop. She subsequently endured six long months in custody awaiting trial, spared only from prison by the offer of accommodation in the gaoler's own home. During this difficult time, the Austens had provided unstinting support for their relative, who, much to their relief, was eventually found not guilty. However, to the family's dismay, this did not remain an isolated incident. In 1805, prior to the ladies' stay in Worthing, a witness claimed to have seen the same Mrs Leigh Perrot taking a plant without payment from a nursery in Bath. Mercifully, however, for various reasons charges on this occasion were not pressed and she avoided both arrest and almost certain deportation. News of the scandal inevitably leaked out and soon spread far afield, probably even reaching the parlours of Worthing. A certain Miss Matilda Rich, who spent a good deal of time in bath, had relayed the story to her friend Mrs Hind, wife of the vicar of Findon, just north of Worthing.³⁰ In no time the news would have extended to the heart of the resort itself, causing many tongues to wag. We can only hope for the Austens' sake that more newsworthy stories soon superseded this sorry tale.

Celebrations

Fortunately, there were many other members of the family to occupy the thoughts of Mrs Austen and her daughters that autumn, not least Jane's two naval brothers, Frank and Charles. Both had joined the Royal Navy as young midshipmen and by 1805 were well on course to becoming future distinguished admirals. Indeed, by then Lord Nelson already held Frank Austen in high regard, having referred to him earlier that same year as 'an excellent young man' and to his ship, *Canopus*, as 'his right hand'.³¹ Unbeknown to his mother and sisters in Worthing that October, Frank was in fact at that time engaged with the British fleet off the southern coast of Spain, poised to embark on 'one of the most famous and important events in British, and indeed, world history'.³² It was of course, the Battle of Trafalgar. As fate would have it, however, and to his permanent regret, Frank was to be away from the actual scene of battle when hostilities began, collecting urgent supplies from Gibraltar. Similarly, Jane's younger brother Charles Austen was also serving elsewhere on the historic day of 21 October 1805. Following the famous victory, dispatches from Trafalgar arrived at the Admiralty in Whitehall at 1am on 6 November 1805. The momentous news spread like wildfire across the country, probably arriving in Worthing with the next London coach. The nation's jubilation, however, was also mixed with sorrow, on hearing of the tragic death of

Nelson and the loss of many lives on both sides. It is likely that Jane Austen first heard the historic news while in Worthing, for we know that she was definitely still in the town on 4 November, when it was recorded that she witnessed an affidavit before the rector of Broadwater, concerning Martha Lloyd's mother's will. No doubt the Austens shared in the town's Trafalgar celebrations but must have been concerned, like other naval families, for the fate of their loved ones away at sea.

Sussex heralded the momentous news of Trafalgar with cannon fire and the pealing of church bells. Celebratory illuminations were set up and buildings adorned with emblems of the battle on doors and windows. Parties took place, including a grand ball hosted by the Prince Regent in Brighton.³³ The euphoric atmosphere must have been something never to be forgotten. Now, with security at home and supremacy at sea, England was free to flourish and prosper. Trafalgar was soon commemorated everywhere, as in Sanditon, where Mr Parker's new seaside residence is called Trafalgar House. Amusingly though, at the time of writing in 1817, the author adds that 'Mr Parker by then was wondering if the name should rather have been Waterloo'.

Departure

Although we cannot be sure exactly when Jane Austen left Worthing, Deirdre Le Faye, author of *Jane Austen: A Family Record*, suggests that 'they may possibly have remained in the town over Christmas, as the next definite news of their movements is not until 1806'. Importantly, she goes on to add: 'Perhaps it was during these autumn evenings that Jane made a fair copy of her early work 'Lady Susan', adding its Conclusion as she did so'.³⁴

On leaving the Sussex coast, the Austen ladies returned briefly first to Bath, before moving to Southampton, where they shared a house with Frank and his wife. Two years later, Edward offered his mother and sisters a permanent home at Chawton, in a recently vacated bailiff's cottage on his Hampshire estate. Happy to accept, they moved into the newly refurbished Chawton Cottage in July 1809. Jane Austen was particularly delighted to be returning to her beloved Hampshire countryside not far from Steventon, where, content in their quiet routine over the next eight years, she was to complete six of the world's most celebrated novels. Tragically however, by 1817 the newly acclaimed authoress was terminally ill, suffering from what may have been Addison's disease, with symptoms of increasing pain and weakness. Her creative genius, however, was undiminished and with great personal courage and strength of spirit, perhaps even defiance, Jane Austen in late January set about writing the story of *Sanditon*. During this time her thoughts must have returned often to that autumn of 1805 and her experiences in Worthing. In spite of rapidly declining health, she was able to complete twelve brilliant chapters before placing, on 18 March, what was so sadly to be her final full stop.

The following October, only three months after her sister's death, Cassandra Austen returned once more to Worthing with her brother James and other members

of his family, on a visit which must have evoked poignant memories of the happy times she had shared with Jane only twelve years before.

Now, two hundred years later, when Jane Austen's novels are enjoyed the world over, as the 21st century unfolds, Worthing can justly celebrate its unique place in the life and work of England's best loved female novelist.

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Notes

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2 D. Robert Elleray, *A Millenium Encyclopedia of Worthing History*, p. 31.

- 3 Deirdre Le Faye, Jane Austen, *The World of her Novels*, p. 298.
- 4 All the entries in Fanny Knight's diaries will be found in Le Faye, *A Chronology of Jane Austen and her Family*, p. 319.
- 5 Ronald Kerridge and Michael Standing, *Worthing: From Saxon Settlement to Seaside Town*, pp. 101-102.
- 6 Elleray, op. cit., p. 126.
- 7 John Evans, *A Picture of Worthing*, p. 29.
- 8 Kerridge and Standing op. cit., pp. 126-27.
- 9 Sally White, *Worthing Past*, p. 27.
- 10 Kerridge and Standing, op. cit., p. 95.
- 11 Evans, op. cit., p. 15.
- 12 Ibid., p. 22.
- 13 Various authors, *Worthing Parade 1*, p. 15.
- 14 Evans, op. cit., p. 31.
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- 31 David Nokes, *Jane Austen*, pp. 291, 293.
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Lovers' Vows in Winchester

Chris Viveash and Helen Lefroy

The recent rediscovery of a playbill for *Lovers' Vows* in newly catalogued archives at the Hampshire Record Office is a cause for celebration.¹ Although such a playbill was on display at Jane Austen's House in the early 1970s, its whereabouts since have been a mystery.² The reason for its welcome back is the fact that the performance took place on 11 August 1809. Jane Austen, her sister Cassandra, and their mother, had settled into Chawton in July 1809. Speculation as to whether Jane Austen took the sixteen miles' carriage journey into Winchester, at night, to enjoy the play, must be reserved for later in this article. *Lovers' Vows* was pivotal to the plot of *Mansfield Park*, but also a popular choice for the Winchester theatre at a busy time in its performing year. The seasonal bustle of the racing on Worthy Down brought crowds to the city, and the theatre was guaranteed full houses during the St Swithun's race meeting.

The Winchester Theatre was situated in Jewry Street and had been opened in 1785.³ At first sight the building seemed insubstantial to the citizens of the city; however, the consensus was that it was not only elegant but also surprisingly commodious. Good approach to boxes and pit, with easy access to the gallery, made it instantly appreciated. The front of the stage was graced by a grand arch, supported by two Ionic columns beautifully gilt and ornamented, with a bust of Shakespeare presiding over all. Blue sky with chasing clouds was painted on the ceiling, concealing a ventilator which was brought into use to cool the audience on a warm August night. The present season was hard work for the cast of actors as a different play was produced to keep the racing patrons returning to the theatre each evening. For this reason the management would allow 'benefit performances' to take place. This gave the actors an added incentive to sell handfuls of tickets as they were allowed to receive a percentage of the box-office takings for those evenings.

In the London theatres it was usual for top actors to take all the night's takings on benefit performances, less hire and wages of staff. In April 1806, Martha Lloyd ventured into the Bath Theatre to see the great actor George Frederick Cooke perform.⁴ He made so much money from benefits at Bath that while returning home, calling at Marlborough, he was insensibly drunk on the proceeds. This deplorable state lasted for nine days, before Cooke returned to the engagements he had contracted to play in London. Naturally, he missed these performances, adding to his reputation for irresponsibility.⁵ (It is at Marlborough that Willoughby stops for his 'nuncheon' in *Sense and Sensibility*).

However, provincial theatre managers at smaller venues couldn't be expected to give so handsome a share of the night's takings to relatively unknown players, and it was usual for actors to help sell extra tickets by dint of knocking on patrons' doors to stir up interest. It will be noticed that the three recipients of the benefit

WINCHESTER THEATRE.

By Desire and under the Patronage of several LADIES
and GENTLEMEN.

FOR THE BENEFIT OF

**Mrs. SMITH, Mr. GILBERT, and
Mrs. BARRE.**

On Friday Evening, August 11, 1809,

Will be presented the favourite Comedy, called

LOVERS VOWS.

Baron Wildenheim. Mr. TAYLOR.	Anhalt, Mr. KELLY.
Count Cassell, - Mr. HORTON.	Frederick, Mr. MAXFIELD.
Landlord, - Mr. MORGAN.	Cottager, - Mr. GILL.
Farmer, - Mr. YOUNG.	Countryman, - Mr. MARDIN.
Verdan, (the Rhiming Butler) Mr. GILBERT.	

Agathy Friburg, Mrs. BRERETON.—Amelia Wildenheim, Mrs. BARRE.

Cottager's Wife,, Miss DOWNER—Country Girl, Mrs. MAXFIELD.

End of the Play, (for this night only) Mrs. BARRE will recite Collins's celebrated

"ODE ON THE PASSIONS,"

With appropriate Music.

After the Play, the following Entertainments,

Two entire New Comic Songs by Mr. GILBERT,
"John Bull in Town." or "British Wool for Ever."

"What a Beauty I did grow."

The three following Songs, by Mrs. SMITH,

"The Poor Baby's Hush-a-bye,"

"Remember when we walked alone,"

"White Man never go away."

"Jemmy Linkum Feedie," by Mr. FLOYER.

To conclude with, by Desire the favourite Comic Opera, called

Inkle and Yarico.

Inkle, Mr. HORTON.—Trudge, Mr. FLOYER.—Sir Christopher, Mr. GILBERT.

Captain Campley, Mr. MARDIN.—Mate, Mr. Maxfield—Medium, Mr. GILL.

Sailors, Messrs. Kerr and Morgan.

Wouski, Mrs. SMITH. | Narcissa, Miss DOWNER. | Patty, Mrs. MAXFIELD.

Yarico, Mrs. BARRE.

Tickets to be had of Mrs. SMITH, at Mr. KERNOT's, near the Black Swan.—Mrs. BARRE, at Mr. BRUCE's,
Upper-brook-street;—Mr. GILBERT, Mr. DEACON's, Grocer, near the Market; and at the Libraries.

JAMES ROBBINS, Printer, Winchester.

Playbill from the Hampshire Chronicle collection, 1908

LOVERS' VOWS;

A PLAY, IN FIVE ACTS:

ALTERED FROM THE GERMAN OF KOTZEBUE.—BY MRS. INCHBALD.



Act I.—Scene I.

CHARACTERS.

COUNT CASSEL
BARON WILDENHAIM
MR. ANHALT
FREDERICK
VERDUN

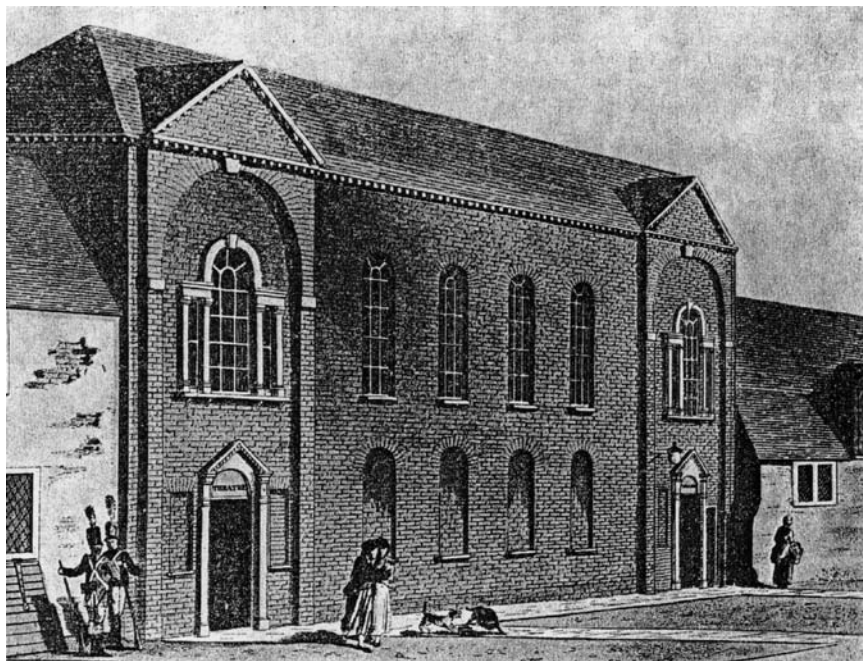
LANDLORD
COTTAGER
FARMER
COUNTRYMAN
HUNSMEN

AGATHA FRIBURG
AMELIA WILDENHAIM
COTTAGER'S WIFE
COUNTRY GIRL
SERVANTS

performance of *Lovers' Vows* have their names at the bottom of the playbill and addresses in Winchester where they were able to sell tickets for this performance. Tragically, the owner of the theatrical company, Thomas Collins, had died that year from cancer, but his plucky daughter Harriet and her husband Henry Kelly kept the company moving round the region from Chichester, Salisbury, Southampton to Winchester and Portsmouth.

Lovers' Vows was a firm favourite with audiences, especially in the version which Elizabeth Inchbald had adapted from a literal translation of the original work, *Das Kind der Liebe* by August von Kotzebue. Clever as Mrs Inchbald undoubtedly was, she could neither speak nor write a word of German, but she knew English audiences well enough to know what they looked for to provide a good night out at the theatre. Mrs Inchbald only respected the translated text when it suited her purpose, which was to produce a play to please a contemporary

audience.⁶ She recognised the ‘original unfitness for the English stage, and the difficulty of making it otherwise’. (The concept of a nobleman acknowledging an illegitimate child and marrying the seduced victim as his second wife was quite unorthodox.) The author, Kotzebue, was astonished to learn from a correspondent in Moscow that the play was a firm hit there: ‘It is well translated into Russian’⁷. The British royal family gave the piece respectability when King George, Queen Charlotte and four Princesses attended a performance at Covent Garden on 25 October 1798.⁸



The New Theatre, Winchester 1805

After a long day up at the races the boisterous audience at Winchester was in a mood for fun. The streets around the theatre smelt heavily of food cooking, as taverns, hotels and lodging houses fed the hungry racegoers, and ale houses supplied their capacious thirst. Replete with food and drink, the audience of punters, London milliners, hairdressers, pickpockets and cardsharpers piled into the Winchester Theatre for a good three hours of noisy top entertainment. Wicks were trimmed, lamps filled, seats occupied and the curtain went up on a scene depicting the High Road outside the town, Mr Morgan, as the landlord, evicting Mrs Brereton as Agathy[sic] Friburg. Laughs soon came thick and fast as the second scene revealed the fat cottager’s wife smacking her chops at the thought of the various drinks which might revive the failing Agatha, with lots of pantomimic stage business comparing wine with brandy (this part was usually played by a

low comedienne of the Dawn French/Hattie Jacques type, the reason why Fanny Price recoiled from playing the role at Mansfield Park). The play unfolds with its share of laughter and tears until the final affecting scene of the abandoned mother and son restored to the errant Baron Wildenhaim, his faults forgiven. The Baron's daughter was allowed to marry her tutor rather than the sensual Count Cassel (Mr Rushworth rather less than a brutish rake in his 'blue dress and a pink satin cloak', at Mansfield Park). *Lovers' Vows* wove the usual beguiling web of emotion, shock and fond laughter and the audience cheered its approval at the final curtain.

Hardly had the audience recovered from the traumatic turmoil, when Mrs Barre swept back on stage, swathed in patriotic colours, to recite William Collins's 'Ode on the Passions'. It was usual on provincial circuits for actors to show off their skills in a *divertissement* between two plays. One actor was famous for his New-Market Jockey Dance performed in boots and spurs. Rope Dancing was another flashy entertainment, but generally intervals included songs and dramatic recitations. Mrs Barre's item was a poem always in great demand for the interlude between plays in many theatres. It was a barnstorming piece written by William Collins, who was a Winchester College scholar before moving on to Queen's College, Oxford, in 1740. The 'Ode on the Passions' was first heard at Encaenia, in Oxford, and achieved universal approval. Mrs Lefroy's brother, Sir Samuel Egerton Brydges, wrote of it: 'If the Passions are not described with splendour, there is no such thing as splendour. If the beauties which he sought and attained are unnatural and extravagant, then the tests of correctness and good taste which have been hitherto set up must be abandoned.'⁹ Mr Wopsle in Dickens's *Great Expectations* subdues noisy pupils by quoting from the Ode in the guise of Revenge 'throwing his bloodstained sword in thunder down ... with a withering look.'¹⁰ At Winchester that evening Mrs Barre's neck would glow red as she gave her dramatic rendition, carefully shading the various dramatic stanzas and rising in a great crescendo of sound whilst performing this heroic piece.

Two comic songs sung by Mr Gilbert followed, then Mrs Smith assumed the stage to give a sneak teasing preview of her notable performance as Wowski (a native servant) in the next full-length entertainment. 'Remember when we walked alone; and heard, so gruff, the lion growl', an aria from Act II, Scene 1 of *Inkle and Yarico*, was swiftly followed by 'White man, never go away, Tell me why need you?' These affecting songs whetted appetites for the opera to come and paved the way for Mr Floyer to sing his song from *Inkle and Yarico*, 'A clerk I was in London gay, Jemmy linkum feedle',¹¹ which had the crowd roaring for more. Although Billy Floyer, the comedian, was really a bit-player, he achieved immortal status through the pen of Charles Dickens as Mr Folair, a dancer and pantomimic actor in *Nicholas Nickleby*. Vincent Crummies's company are at the Theatre in Portsmouth, where Dickens was born. Portsmouth was a major part on the very circuit of which the Winchester Theatre was a component part; although the Infant Phenomenon may have thought poorly of Mr Folair, the audiences of Portsmouth and Winchester approved mightily of real life Billy Floyer and his comic technique.¹²



*Henry Crawford and Maria Bertram
rehearsing at Mansfield Park*



*Mr Rushworth rehearsing at
Mansfield Park*



*Mr Yates rehearsing at
Mansfield Park*



*Tom Bertram rehearsing at
Mansfield Park*

With a crash as the rear doors opened, the half-price patrons would come rushing in to fill any vacant seats in the theatre to see the affecting tale of *Inkle and Yarico*. Mr Thomas Inkle gets lost on a trading expedition and is brought to safety by Yarico, princess of the Amazon. When they reach Barbados Thomas Inkle is persuaded to put her up for sale as a slave; she begs for mercy as she genuinely loves him and had risked all to help him escape (the text makes clear that they have slept together). His servant, Trudge (played by Floyer), refuses all offers to sell his maiden, and stands by his native love, Wowski (Mrs Smith), with the line, ‘She saved my life, and rot me if anything but death shall part us’ (to great approbation from the raucous audience). The Governor of Barbados gets wind of illegal slaving and when he hears of Yarico’s sacrifice he upbraids Inkle: ‘Mean, sordid wretch! Dead to all sense of honour, gratitude or humanity.’ Shamed, Inkle is forced to confront the precepts which his father has instilled in him, and by taking Yarico as his wife renounces them before the whole company. Trudge (Billy Floyer) embraces Wowski (Mrs Smith) and the various subplot characters are all joined happily. The finale music swells as the company sing and Inkle intones, ‘Banish now my thirst for gold, /Bless’d in these arms to fold, /My gentle Yarico.’ Curtain calls and loud hurrahs brought the long evening to a close, but not before the three benefit recipients had assessed between curtain calls how many patrons had attended the performance, and calculated their own share of the takings. The exhausted, but happy, theatre patrons eventually spilled out into the street and the cooler August night.

We must now consider whether Jane Austen attended the performance on 11 August 1809 of *Lovers’ Vows*, which might have prompted her to use it in her novel begun two years later, in 1811. On 7 July 1809, just one month before the show, Mrs Austen, Cassandra and Jane moved into the cottage at Chawton.¹³ Remembering that the average horse drawn vehicle can cover just fifty miles in a whole day’s travel, it would take too long to drive to and from Winchester. Whose carriage would they use? Mr Middleton was the lessee occupier of the manor house and possibly the owner of the carriage; but would Jane importune him so soon after taking up residence?¹⁴ Would Jane like to be cheek by jowl with noisy race goers? Her poem on the Winchester races written just three days before her death in Winchester considers the people generally depraved, rebellious, enslaved by vice: ‘These races & revels & dissolute measures, /With which you’re debasing a neighbouring Plain’.¹⁵ This does not sound like the line of a playgoer who would care to sit in close proximity to these rough citizens for a long, hot evening. The likelihood of Jane Austen attending the performance of *Lovers’ Vows* in Winchester, regretfully, cannot be countenanced.

Notes

- 1 Hampshire Record Office, Ref: 3A 00W/E14. The writers are grateful for permission to reproduce this playbill.
- 2 Adburgham, Alison, *Women in Print* (London, 1972), p. 173.

- 3 Ranger, Paul, 'The Georgian Playhouses of Hampshire', *Hampshire Papers* 10. Phil Yates has pointed out that the present Winchester Theatre Royal is not on the site of the 1785 building, which was sold in 1861. The building on the site of the old theatre is known as Sheridan House to commemorate the first play performed there, *The Rivals*. The site of the old theatre, and the present theatre, are located in Jewry Street, Winchester.
- 4 Austen-Leigh, R. A., *Austen Papers* (London, 1942), p. 237.
- 5 Troubridge, St. Vincent, *The Benefit System in the British Theatre* (London, 1967), p. 42. Penley, Belville, *The Bath Stage* (London, 1892), pp. 99-100.
- 6 L.F. Thompson, *Kotzebue: A Survey of his Progress in France and England* (Paris, 1928), p. 63.
- 7 Kotzebue, A. von, *Sketch of the Life and Literary Career of Augustus von Kotzebue* (London, 1827) vol. I, p. 72.
- 8 Grateful thanks to Clive Caplan for this information, given some years ago.
- 9 Brydges, Sir Samuel E., *The Poetical Works of William Collins* (London, 1830), p. iii. Also, *Censura Literaria*, Vol 6 (London, 1805-9), pp. 90-3. Gilson, David, *Jane Austen, Collected Articles and Introductions* (privately printed, 1998), pp. 135-7.
- 10 Dickens, Charles, *Nicholas Nickleby* (Oxford, 1966), pp. 39-40.
- 11 *The British Drama* (London, 1824), pp. 1448-65.
- 12 Saunders, W.H., *The Annals of Portsmouth* (London, 1880), pp. 214-17.
- 13 Le Faye, Deirdre, *A Chronology of Jane Austen and her Family* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 370.
- 14 Le Faye, Deirdre, *Jane Austen, A Family Record* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 175. This writer has generously provided material on the Winchester Theatre over the years, for which the writers of this article are grateful.
- 15 Selwyn, David, ed., *Jane Austen, Collected Poems and Verse of the Austen Family* (Manchester, 1996), pp. 17-8. The exhaustive notes on this poem, contained within pages 69-70, are invaluable.

James Edward Austen at Oxford

Chris Viveash

The noise and confusion in Turl Street were not to be described as carts, gigs, curricles and other conveyances jammed the lane in early October 1816, when Jane Austen's nephew James Edward Austen arrived at Oxford in time for his matriculation. The chaos was made worse by Jesus College's undergraduates also milling about, as their college entrance was directly opposite Exeter's. Every carriage outside Exeter College appeared to have a horse tethered to the rear, which undergraduate owners needed to stable in suitable livery accommodation in the city, before nightfall (no respectable student would attend college without his prized hunter to hand for the season).

James Edward had been to school at Winchester College and so college life held no terrors, but finding his room with the help of a porter was the first priority for the fresher from Hampshire. Most of the forty students studying at Exeter were likely to hail from Devon or Cornwall; the relaxed regime then in place allowed the men to do very much as they liked as long as they attended chapel and lectures. Consequently they enjoyed vigorous shooting, fishing and hunting sorties which invariably terminated with heavy drinking and the lusty singing of convivial songs. Two undergraduates already studying at Exeter when James Edward arrived deserve our attention, the first being Charles Lyell. He was up for the period 1816-1819, and was to distinguish himself eventually as a geologist and mineralogist. His claim on James Edward's attention was that the latter's aunt, Jane Austen, knew Lyell's grandmother and two aunts when they lived at Southampton. One of the Lyell aunts, Ann, married Captain Gilbert Heathcote, an event which Jane Austen had predicted would occur even before she had received positive confirmation from her friend, Alethea Bigg. This fact was then related gleefully to her sister, Cassandra Austen, in a letter of 20 November 1808.

Charles Lyell also supplies us with a vignette of the type beloved of college undergraduates. A West-countryman, from Devonshire, being examined for his degree, was asked '... who was Moses ?' 'Moses ?' he answered. 'Knows nothing about Moses, but ax me about St. Paul, and there I has ye.'¹

Another splendid character who was still at Exeter College when James Edward arrived was the immensely strong young man named John Russell. Taller than average, he sparred, boated and hunted with great industry. Whilst studying at Exeter, John Russell became possessed of Trump, 'such a terrier as he had as yet seen only in his dreams'; this animal became the ancestress of the famous 'Jack Russell' breed (it has been said that he purchased this paragon among dogs from a milkman). Both Jack Russell and James Edward rode out with the Duke of Beaufort's hounds to hunt, whilst undergraduates at Exeter College.

Once our fresher, James Edward, had settled into the Michaelmas term he was to learn more about the Rector of Exeter College, Dr John Cole, who was then

aged sixty and had served as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford for the period 1810-1814. The Rector had commenced his term in office at Exeter College in 1814. Interestingly, he was a Naval Chaplain but not a seagoing cleric: his duties entailed ministering to the devotional needs of His Royal Highness Prince William, the Duke of Clarence. The Duke was later to become King William IV, affectionately dubbed ‘Sailor Billy’ by the general populace.



Exterior of Exeter College Hall

James Edward himself was not unconnected with persons capable of patronage; he was qualified to claim, through a Founder’s Kin scholarship, an allowance financed by the Craven family. In his quest to gain the required proof of this association he was forced to travel to Bishopstone, in Wiltshire, to assemble pertinent certificates of marriages and baptisms. This mission proved unsuccessful, however, as these documents were eventually discovered ‘long years afterwards’ at the church at Norton, near Lenchwick, Worcestershire where James Edward’s grandmother had been christened. His maternal great-grandfather, Charles Craven (Governor of South Carolina) with his wife, Elizabeth Staples, were fairly easy going folk and it was feared that they had not bothered to have their children christened. The newly found papers proved that while they lived at Lenchwick, they had obviously attended to these necessary solemnities. Clever Mary Austen, who was anxious to see her son educated at Oxford, located Mrs Criswick, who was a servant of Governor Craven, in addition to an old friend, Mrs Hulbert, from Speen, Newbury. These admirable ladies were prepared to sign sworn oaths to



Interior of Exeter College Hall

the effect that James Edward was a distant sprig of the Craven family. Dr Cole allowed the provision of the desired yearly scholarship of £25 for James Edward, when the hastily assembled affidavits arrived at a timely moment.³

A young man who had come up to Oxford in February 1816, and whom James liked on first sight, was Alexander Dyce. He was not a sporting hearty but more inclined to serious studies and in particular literature. Years later, he still remembered how James Edward had told him, in these shared Oxford days, that Jane Austen thought Fanny Burney ‘the very best of English novelists’.⁴ Alexander Dyce then shyly confessed in these early meetings to a secret obsession, that of being hopelessly addicted to the theatre and plays, a vice which James Edward cheerfully shared. In later years his daughter, Mary Augusta Austen Leigh would

vouchsafe the information that her father even raced to see the latest plays when he was up in London for his ordination as deacon, and then as priest.⁵



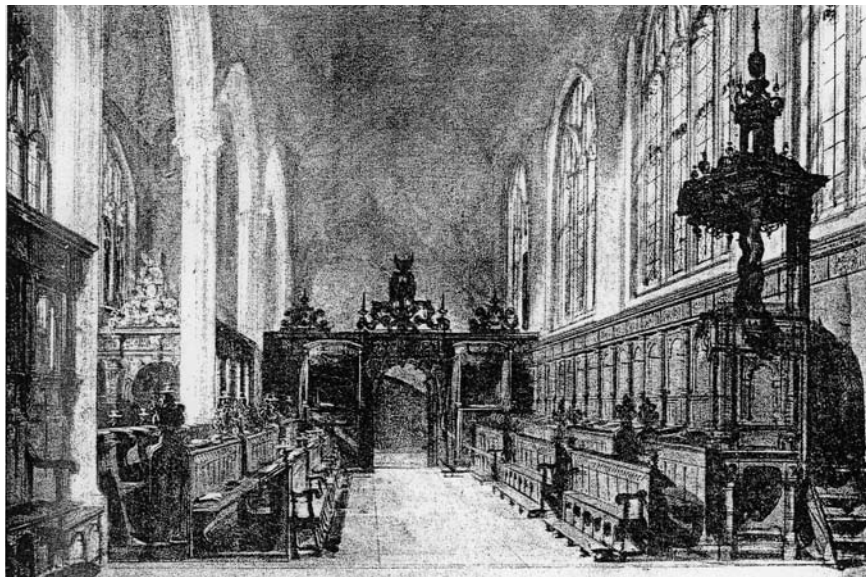
Turl Street Oxford

Francis Pearce, of Idstone in Berkshire, was also up at Exeter, and was known to the Lloyd family. James Edward's grandfather, Nowys Lloyd, was a sometime rector of nearby Bishopstone, on the Wiltshire/Berkshire border. Francis, with his country accent, proved to be a dependable and easygoing friend of our young undergraduate. Gradually James Edward found Oxford becoming more accessible and welcoming than previously, as his father James Austen had predicted.

The following year, 1817, was one of great sorrow; James Edward's beloved aunt, Jane Austen, died. It was particularly cruel as her fame was gradually spreading, and in 1815 she had received the signal honour of being entertained at Carlton House, by the Prince Regent's librarian. James Edward was allowed to attend the modest funeral service of his aunt, in Winchester Cathedral, representing the head of the family as his father James was unwell and unable to attend in person.

The autumn of 1817 was an altogether happier time, however, as his closest friend William Heathcote matriculated at Oriel College. They had been boys together at Meyrick's School at Ramsbury, on the river Kennet, and then moved on to Winchester College together.⁶ The future at Oxford now seemed set for pleasant days and convivial evenings: 'What a comfort it must be to you to have such a

friend as Heathcote always within reach,' wrote his father, in December 1818. It is no coincidence that James Edward composed two delightfully affectionate poems honouring the bonds of student friendship, one addressed to Heathcote and the other to Alexander Dyce, his two favourites. Another young man who came up to Exeter College, in 1818, whom James Edward was to recognise as a lifelong friend, was John Mitchel Chapman. The confederacy of close friends was completed when Edmund Luttrell Stuart arrived at Exeter College, from Dorset.



Exeter College Chapel

Another casual acquaintance from Hampshire, Carew Mildmay, came up to Oriel College, in 1818. (Henceforward, the three undergraduates Heathcote, Austen and Mildmay travelled up to Oxford in a chaise, together.) Jane Austen mentions Lady Mildmay, Carew's grandmother, in her letters and the fact that she was modishly attired at Hackwood Park in a Mamalouc cap, which Jane was also pleased to adopt as suitable headwear. The author, in 1798, also mentions her son, Henry Mildmay, but only in passing.⁷ By the time James Edward greets Carew Anthony St. John Mildmay, at Oxford, his father Sir Henry Mildmay M.P. (the young boy mentioned by Jane Austen) had already been mired in scandal. He was forced to admit his adultery with his wife's sister, Lady Harriet Rosebery (a tiresome woman who at a party of Lady Heathcote's faced the saturnine Lord Byron, and 'was terrified to meet him, for her heart beat so violently she could not answer him').⁸ The shamed Lord Mildmay had to pay damages to Lord Rosebery of £15,000 at the trial in December 1814, and the following year he married

the divorced Lady Harriet. Later published revelations, in 1825, informed the world that Henry Mildmay had slept with both Harriette Wilson and a fellow courtesan Julia Johnstone, which cannot have been pleasant reading for his son, Carew.⁹ James Edward Austen found Carew Mildmay totally different from his wayward father; the son became a pillar of the church in Essex and well respected throughout his blameless life.

In July 1818 James Edward took his holiday with William Heathcote, his mother Mrs Heathcote and 'Little Aunt' Alethea Bigg on a pleasant tour through Wales. He was apprehensive, however, for the declining health of his own father, James Austen. William Heathcote must then have admitted to James Edward that he was falling under the benign influence of his tutor at Oriel, the Revd John Keble, who was only eight years older than his pupil. Indeed, two years later John Keble spent two weeks with William Heathcote and his widowed mother at their modest home in Winchester Cathedral Close.¹⁰ Later Keble wrote to Heathcote, sententiously exhorting him to 'read as much Homer, Herodotus and Cicero as you conveniently can'.

Shivering undergraduates passing a winter or two at Exeter College found it a rigorous experience, but they quickly discovered that although the dining hall was warm enough when the two new fireplaces were added in 1820, any open fireplace to be found elsewhere in the college would have a large oaf standing in front of it defying others to shift him for a share of the meagre heat. Caroline, James Edward's sister, wrote to him in commiseration: 'Sorry that you find the change from a family fireside to a College Fireside productive of so much discomfort.'¹¹ That year James Edward fell captive to the charms of a young cousin, Marianne Knight, whom his father James thought pretty 'but not so very bewitching' as his son had described her. Tragically, James Austen was at that time mortally ill and died at the rectory at Steventon in December 1819, to his son's great grief. His father had written poignantly earlier that very year 'May you always enjoy health as I trust you will'. William Heathcote wrote sensitively to the sorrowing James Edward: 'He is blessed, to him who is no more in the knowledge that he bequeathed his family to one like himself, one whose inestimable qualities make me proud to call myself his sincere and affectionate friend.'¹² James Edward's own tribute poem to his father includes the touching homage 'Mildest of Men ... Best, earliest Friend ... part in peace ...'¹³

Within college it was announced that at Marazion, in Cornwall, on 13 October 1819, the Rector of Exeter College, Dr Cole, had died. His replacement was another Naval Chaplain, John Collier Jones. This character was a thorough seagoing chaplain who received his chaplaincy appointment letter from the Admiralty in the same year as James Stanier Clarke, Jane Austen's librarian friend from Carlton House Palace. Dr Jones served on H.M.S. *Namur*, at the battle of St Vincent, and afterwards on the 'fighting *Temeraire*'. He suffered imprisonment in France for two years, having visited that country during the Peace of Amiens, and was subsequently trapped there on the resumption of hostilities. Rector Jones was a plain speaking, sometimes rough individual, but when called upon in the routine

of public business carried himself with great dignity. He married, in 1823, the writer Charlotte Yonge's aunt Charlotte Crawley, a merry widow. Charlotte Yonge often visited Oxford and stayed with Dr Jones and his wife at Exeter College.¹⁴

Major changes were in progress at home owing to James Edward's uncle Henry Austen's needing to occupy the rectory at Steventon not only for the commencement of his clerical duties there, but to accommodate the few pupils he had managed to acquire. Also he was to marry as his second wife Elinor Jackson, for his further support and comfort. James Edward returned to Oxford in late January 1820. The social calendar was fairly full for James Edward, as he dined at St John's College and New College, rode to hounds with Edmund Stuart, and after the death of George III, heard George IV proclaimed king at Oxford in February. William Heathcote, meanwhile, urged James Edward to come over to Oriel to hear his Provost, the great reformer Edward Copleston, preaching. Theology and pauperism, with an emphasis on the University of Oxford's reliance on a classical education in the face of fierce attacks from the Edinburgh Review, were the topics aired by Copleston and any lecture or talk would bring out the fighting spirit of the Provost.

Alexander Dyce had gone down the previous year, but he had to see his friend James Edward before travelling up to Scotland. They had a lively dinner at the Angel Inn, with Francis Pearce, discussing the usual topics and possibly teasing their fair friend, Austen, on his continuing ardour for Marianne. In April our undergraduate left college to take rooms in Broad Street, and register for Examinations which were to begin on 20 April.

The summer vacation that year included a trip to Windsor with his mother, sister Caroline and Mrs Leigh Perrot to inspect St George's Chapel and admire the beautiful altarpiece by Benjamin West, Jane Austen's preferred artist for religious paintings. The wealthy Mrs Leigh Perrot detested the idea that personable James Edward was to waste his life in the church, but in her will she finally relented, leaving him a handsome accumulation of property and money, in 1837.

Back at college by 13 October 1820, James Edward was soon in the saddle riding with friends Edmund Stuart and Henry Halford before breakfast. The whipper-in from the Vine Hunt, George Hickson, came up to deliver a horse 'by Doubtful'. Legendary George could discern the bark of every hound in his considerable pack and tell instantly where a hound had drawn a fox out and encourage the dog by name. November was Examinations in Schools and after three days, on the 16th, James Edward took his degree: and then promptly rode out with Edmund Stuart and a mutual friend for a relaxing canter to Blenheim. The 1807 reforms at Exeter College swept away the old oral tradition following formal and predictable lines where failure was almost impossible. Two honours schools were introduced in Classics and Mathematics, and those taking them were given a class.¹⁵

When James Edward had completed his degree ordeal he was taken to New College, Magdalen and All Souls colleges by friends and lionised as having endured the baptism of fire. He celebrated by hunting on 20 November with the prestigious Duke of Beaufort's hounds in Gloucestershire. The last breakfast at



Interior of The Sheldonian Theatre

Oxford was with his great Hampshire friend, William Heathcote, at Oriel College. Did James Edward Austen spare a glance towards the magnificent Leigh Library, at Oriel,¹⁶ not knowing that he would have to add that name (in honour of his great uncle James Leigh Perrot) to his own in order to improve his lot upon this earth? Probably not, as he was itching to return to Hampshire for two days' hunting at The Vine. Such was an Exeter College undergraduate's priority in 1820.

In May 1826 James Edward returned to Oxford, staying at Seale's Coffee House, for a most interesting occasion. He had decided to take his Master's Degree, and he was understandably rather nervous the night before the dawn. As he had passed his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1820, due and sufficient time had elapsed before returning to the university for this present reason. Graduates from Oxford University were, and are now, deemed to have achieved a sufficient level of academic excellence after having paid their college dues for a prescribed number of terms to qualify for the Master of Arts degree without a gruelling re-examination of the candidate, the procedure thus becoming more a financial transaction.

For the third time in his Oxford education James Edward Austen found himself queueing with others, on 3 May 1826, to enter Sir Christopher Wren's architectural masterpiece the Sheldonian Theatre. Heads held high, they were ready to process into that august building; James Edward had done the selfsame thing when he matriculated and upon receiving his B. A. qualification. Eventually he stood briefly before Richard Jenkyns, the Vice-Chancellor of the University, as a prelude to the retirement needed to change into his Master of Arts hood and gown for a second appearance to hear his name solemnly read out by the short, but portly, Dr Jenkyns. This time James Edward was greeted by enthusiastic applause from the assembled academics and graduates.

Throughout these delicate proceedings the elders observed the strictest formality, which culminated in James Edward producing fourteen pounds and six shillings for this prestigious honour. Suddenly it was over and he duly paid for Common Room fees of ten shillings and sixpence to the Exeter College authorities, and an extra shilling for his name to be posted informing all that he had achieved his Master's Degree.¹⁷ A pleasant farewell dinner that night was spent with Chapman, at Balliol College, where undoubtedly they discussed Dr Jenkyns, as he was the current Master of Balliol but becoming increasingly pompous since his elevation to Vice-Chancellor (previously he had been a most approachable and popular figure at college). The next day James Edward returned home to his proud family. As he was an ordained priest at that time, and earning a fairly modest stipend, it was probably his great-aunt Mrs Leigh Perrot who paid for the degree ceremony as she remarked grudgingly, 'I have the sincerest regard for Edward, on every account, and as he has decided for the church ...'¹⁸

Fifty years after James Edward left Oxford his good friend of that last night in Oxford, John Mitchel Chapman, fondly remembered him: 'Of graceful figure and complexion fair – Of cheerful converse and of sparking wit – In English essays he surpassed the rest'.¹⁹ Perhaps this summary of his qualities is the best way to leave the clever and handsome Oxford graduate, James Edward Austen, M.A.

Notes

- 1 Lyell, Charles, *The Life, Letters, and Journals of Sir Charles Lyell* (London, 1881), p. 36.
- 2 Stride, William Keatley, *Exeter College* (London, 1900), pp. 147-149.

- 3 Austen, Caroline, *Reminiscences of Caroline Austen* (Chawton, 1986), pp. 49-50.
- 4 Gilson, David, *A Bibliography of Jane Austen* (Winchester, 1997), p. 89.
- 5 Austen Leigh, Mary Augusta, *James Edward Austen Leigh* (Roehampton, 1911), p. 29.
- 6 Viveash, Chris, 'Placed at School', *Jane Austen Society Collected Reports* Vol. 5, pp, 250-52.
- 7 Le Faye, Deirdre, ed., *Jane Austen's Letters* (Oxford, 1997), p. 33, p. 29.
- 8 Mabel, Countess of Airlie, *In Whig Society* (London, 1921), p. 153.
- 9 Laver, James, *Harriette Wilson's Diary* (London, 1929), p. 200, p. 509.
- 10 Awdry, F., *A Country Gentleman of the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1906), p. 200.
11. Hampshire Record Office, Ref: 23/M93/86/3c. I am indebted to the Record Office for permission to quote extensively from their archives for this article.
- 12, H. R. O., Ref: 23/M93/86/3.
- 13 Selwyn, David, ed., *Fugitive Pieces, Trifles Light as Air* (Winchester, 2006), p. 64.
- 14 Coleridge, C. R., *Charlotte Mary Yonge, her life and letters* (London, 1903), p. 39, p. 103.
- 15 Barr, W. G. *Exeter College* (Oxford, 2001), p. 15.
- 16 Viveash, Chris, 'Dr Barne and the Austens', *The Jane Austen Society Report for 2007*, p. 83.
- 17 I am grateful to David Gilson (Brasenose College) and Gregory Drew (Worcester College) for their invaluable contribution to this reconstruction of the events of that day. See also H.R.O. Ref: 23/M93/ 86/1/1.
- 18 Le Faye, Deirdre, *A Chronology of Jane Austen and her Family* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 631.
- 19 Austen Leigh, p. 350.

Friends and family on the Grand Tour

Margaret Wilson

In the middle of the 18th century the Grand Tour was at the height of its popularity. It so happened that in 1760 four gentlemen of Kent were travelling in Europe, in much the same way as others of their social background. They met up in Florence and the occasion is recorded in the diary of a Kentish clergyman, the Revd Joseph Price, who had heard about this event from a friend, the Revd George Lynch. The four gentlemen, who were all to become MPs, were Thomas Knight, Richard Milles, Sir Wyndham Knatchbull-Wyndham, 6th Bt., and Sir Brook Bridges, 3rd Bt., and all had some connection or association with the Austen family.

Price was told by Lynch that ‘Young Knight travelled with Milles and was never known to have an amour during the three years he was abroad nor since he came home. That these two met Sir Wyndham Knatchbull and Sir Brooke [*sic*] Bridges who both had their girls. That upon this Milles left Knight and took a girl too, but Knight pursued his own course. That Knight loves talking to women, which he sometimes does in a very absurd way.’¹ As Jeremy Black has pointed out ‘travel abroad provided a major opportunity for sexual adventures’.² It sounds as if all but Knight grasped the opportunity.

Joseph Price’s evidence that Bridges took advantage of the chance to flirt with ladies in Florence is corroborated by a comment from Sir Horace Walpole. In a letter to Horace Mann (14 June 1760) Walpole told him ‘we have B B [Brook Bridges] nursing a dancing girl in an obscure villa and waiting the hour of her being brought to bed’.³ Such affairs with singers and dancers were not uncommon and Jane Austen reflects this in one of her *Juvenilia* stories, ‘Love and Freindship’, when she refers to Lord St Clair having two daughters by Laurina, an Italian opera girl.⁴ Bridges was sufficiently well known to be included in a famous picture by the artist and caricaturist Thomas Patch, which is called ‘The English Club House at Florence’ (or sometimes ‘The Golden Asses’ after Machiavelli’s assertion that English visitors to Italy were confident but ignorant).⁵

The ‘Young Knight’ mentioned is Thomas Knight of Godmersham who was later in his life to have a strong impact on the life of the Austens. Our knowledge about the four gentlemen’s tours of Europe varies considerably; little is known about Thomas Knight’s travels, except for the fact that he and Richard Milles received architecture lessons in Rome from Robert Mylne, who refers to this in a letter of 1758.⁶ This Scottish architect had won a silver medal for architecture in Italy in September 1758 and then took travelling amateurs as his pupils. Armed with enthusiasm from this tuition, the men sought to improve their properties when they returned to England. Thomas Knight made extensions to Godmersham Park, which his father had built, but it is not known which architect he used.

Thomas’s travelling companion, Richard Milles, a neighbour in Kent, lived in Nackington House, only six-and-a-half miles from Godmersham. With a rich

inheritance in Norfolk from his mother and his own marriage to an heiress, he became a very wealthy man. He stands out from his companions as a particularly generous patron of the artist Pompeo Batoni, whose Grand Tour portraiture featured in an exhibition at the National Gallery in 2008. Milles commissioned three portraits of himself from Batoni, the largest of which is a three-quarter length study now in the National Gallery; in it he is portrayed in the open air together with a classical bust suggesting an interest in antiquity. Batoni also painted a miniature of his face on ivory, with a surrounding of gems; this unusual picture is now in the Fitzwilliam Museum.

Sir Wyndham Knatchbull-Wyndham was the only son of the 5th Baronet, whom he succeeded in 1749. Dying at the young age of twenty-six, he therefore lived and died long before Jane was born. His estate, Mersham Hatch, is near Ashford. His presence at the meeting in Florence is not surprising as he took with him a letter of introduction from William Pitt to Horace Mann, the British envoy in that city from 1738-83.⁷ His portrait by Batoni (now in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and unfortunately not shown in the recent London exhibition) was and is highly regarded. He is shown full length in Van Dyck dress with his dog, and a classical temple in the background. The combination of formal and informal captures what Francis Russell has called 'the essence of the Grand Tour portraiture'.⁸ We know a good deal about Wyndham's travels because some of his journal has survived.⁹ In it he records varied experiences and impressions which range from his visit to a salt mine in Bex, near the Swiss border, where he was given a gown and hood to protect his lace and buttons from changing colour in the polluted atmosphere, to the ceremonies of Good Friday in Turin and the Anatomy School in Leyden.

It is Sir Brook Bridges who was not only painted by Batoni but also by the German artist Anton Raphael Mengs. According to Francis Russell, Bridges was very interested in the arts and a patron of the Venetian artist Francesco Guardi, being one of the first Englishman to buy his Venetian townscapes.¹⁰

The four tourists from Kent were on the fringe of Jane's social circle. Thomas Knight was a wealthy, distant cousin of the Austens from Kent who decided, after his marriage to Catherine Knatchbull produced no children, to adopt Jane's brother, Edward. This opportunity not only gave Edward many privileges but through her visits to his grand home at Godmersham Jane was able to broaden her horizons and observe at close hand certain aspects of society rather different from what she, as the daughter of a country parson, was used to. Her observations provided rich colour to the background of her novels.

Although Jane may have met Mr Knight when he came to Steventon to see the family and arrange the adoption, she was very young and probably did not remember him. When Edward went to live with his adoptive parents, Mrs Knight was a very attentive substitute mother to him and once wrote to him that she felt for him 'the tenderness of a Mother'.¹¹ Jane came to know the old lady after she was widowed and moved to Canterbury in 1798. Jane used to visit her there and mentions her in letters in 1808 and 1811. Wyndham Knatchbull-Wyndham's link

with the Austens is that he was Mrs Knight's first cousin. Jane met his sister, Joan, when she was invited as a dinner guest to Edward Austen's house, Rowling, in September 1796.¹²

Jane also knew Richard Milles as a neighbour of her brother Edward, with whom she socialised during her visits to Godmersham. In the edition of her *Letters* made long after her death her great-nephew, Lord Braboume, mentions how in a letter of 17 September, 1796, 'the wealth of Mr Milles is pleasantly referred to' by Jane when she dined with him.¹³

In the case of Sir Brook Bridges there is a strong marriage link with the Austens as he was the father-in-law of Jane's brother Edward. His daughter Elizabeth married Edward in December 1791. Sir Brook, whose house, Goodnestone Park, is east of Canterbury, died in September after the engagement was announced in March. As none of Jane's letters survive before 1796, we cannot know if she ever met him, but it is unlikely.

Jane did have a close source of information about the Grand Tour, namely her own brothers. James made a short trip to France in 1786 when he went to visit the French husband of his cousin Eliza in the southwest of the country. His mother wrote on 31 December that she hoped he had got there: 'he was then windbound some weeks in the little island of Jersey or he would have got to the end of his long journey by the beginning of this Month.'¹⁴ He did arrive safely and enjoyed his visit. However, this was a small expedition compared to that of his brother Edward.

Edward Austen enjoyed the advantage of having a rich benefactor and went on a full Grand Tour in the late 1780s; two of his journals have recently been published.¹⁵ One covers the month of August 1786 when he was in Switzerland and the other covers his homeward journey from Italy in June and July 1790. His accounts are full of interest. He visited a silk works in a village on the road to Turin and gives a detailed description of how the worm produces its silk. He had to dismantle his carriage on the snowy road from Switzerland into Italy, a common practice at the time, writing: 'the body of the carriage is placed on two sticks like the pole of a sedan chair and carried between two mules'. Edward saw the tomb of Erasmus in Basle Cathedral and commented on the fine Holbein pictures in that city. He also admired Van Dyck's picture of Charles I and his self-portrait with a sunflower in Turin.

Just before Jane's death in 1817, Edward's sons, Edward Junior, Henry and George, started out on a tour in Paris but they all abandoned it after a few months; Edward was the only one to set out again, accompanied by a cousin, in the following year. Fortunately his journal describing his experiences has survived in the Knight family archives.¹⁶

Young Edward made a physically demanding tour of a silver mine at Freiburg near Dresden, starting at five a.m., descending with a lantern hung on his chest, climbing down eight ladders to a depth of 1400 ft. He had a unique experience when he paid a visit to the site of the Battle of Waterloo, which he saw only three years after the event. This included seeing the shot-riddled elm tree under which

the Duke of Wellington stayed for much of the day. On reviewing the whole site he commented 'I have a very perfect idea of the battle from having seen the different positions'. In Padua he was intrigued by a 'curiously wrought piece of marble representing the fall of the angels from heaven containing 60 different figures'. This was the 6 ft sculpture carved from one block of marble by Agostino Fasolata. He was surprised in Brussels at how crowded the churches were, with 'very little appearance of devotion, the aisle was filled with persons kneeling and praying while others were walking indiscriminately among them as if it had been a public promenade.'

Both Edward and his son spent some time in Dresden. Edward Senior had a prolonged stay for about a year from the summer of 1788. He got to know Prince Maximilian of Saxony well enough to write to him 20 years later on behalf of his son.¹⁷ Edward Junior duly made a stop in Dresden, where he attended the court and was presented to many princes and princesses.

Since the study of architecture was such a feature of the Tour it was natural that men would put their observations to good use. Wyndham Knatchbull Wyndham is known to have asked Robert Mylne to do sketches for Mersham Hatch in December 1758. His house was in dire need of repair and renovation but Wyndham eventually chose to employ the well-respected Robert Adam. The only member of the Kent quartet who did use Mylne was Brook Bridges. It is not known for certain if he met Mylne in Italy but we know that he commissioned him to remodel Goodnestone. Mylne's diaries show he went to the house in March 1772, surveyed it and sent a 'paper of Observations on the improvement of his house at Goodnestone' to Sir Brook.¹⁸ There is no record of the work being carried out, but in 1777 Mylne dined at the house which suggests that his plan was used. The oval hall with niches and painted flowers are characteristic of the Scottish architect's restrained style. Jane Austen enjoyed these elegant surroundings after her brother had married Elizabeth Bridges, for she went to dances there, notably in 1796.

It has already been noted that English gentlemen used the Grand Tour as an occasion to indulge in flirtations. Sometimes travelling produced a more permanent liaison. In a later generation of Jane's family her great-nephew, Edward Knatchbull-Hugessen (the first Lord Braboume) met his future wife Anna Southwell, the daughter of an English clergyman, in Italy. The opportunity to meet one's life partner while travelling did not escape Jane's attention but her fictional version is rather different. In 1792, soon after her brother returned from his Grand Tour, she wrote one of her Juvenilia, 'Lesley Castle', in which she paints a rather highly coloured version of such an episode. The character Lesley on his travels in Italy turns Roman Catholic, has his existing marriage annulled and then marries 'a Neapolitan lady of Rank and Fortune'.¹⁹ The Grand Tour was not among Jane's own experiences, so it is not surprising that in her depiction of it she gave free rein to her imagination.

Notes

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- 3 Lewis, W. S., ed., *Correspondence of Sir Horace Walpole with Sir Horace Mann*, vol.21 (Oxford, 1967).
- 4 Austen, Jane, *Minor Works* (Oxford, 1972) p. 106.
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- 6 Ingamells, J, *A Dictionary of British and Irish Travellers in Italy 1701-1800* (London, 1997).
- 7 Ingamells, J, op. cit.
- 8 Russell, Francis, 'Portraits on the Grand Tour: Batoni's British Sitters', *Country Life* 7 June 1973.
- 9 Knatchbull family papers, U951 F19. I am grateful to the Centre for Kentish Studies for permission to use Wyndham's Journal.
- 10 Russell, Francis, 'Guardi and the English Tourist', *Burlington Magazine*, vol. 13, 8 Jan. 1996.
- 11 Austen-Leigh, R. A. *Austen Papers* (privately printed, 1942)
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- 13 Braboume, Lord, ed., *Letters of Jane Austen* (Bentley, 1884), vol. 1, p. 124
- 14 Le Faye, Deirdre, 'Three Austen Family Letters', *Notes & Queries*, vol. 32, No. 3, Sept. 1985.
- 15 Spence, Jon, *Jane Austen's brother abroad: The Grand Tour Journals of Edward Austen* (JASA Press: 2005).
- 16 Reproduced by permission of the Hampshire Record Office, 18M61 Box 88, 445.
- 17 Spence, Jon, pp. 7-8.
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Art and the Austen Family

Adrienne Bradney-Smith

The Austens appear to have been one of those families disproportionately blessed with brains, good looks and creative talent. The Revd George Austen was a scholar and his wife, Cassandra, a practical woman who enjoyed writing light-hearted verses. Their eight children, with the exception of their disabled son, George, were gifted and highly intelligent and, to varying degrees, led successful lives, a characteristic which continued through subsequent generations, although the family produced only one genius – Jane Austen herself.

In this paper, I wish to trace the Austen family involvement in art, and to finish with my own rather inconclusive research, assisted by some very kind scholars, on some of the well-known pictures seen in the Austen biographies, in particular those attributed to Anna Lefroy, Jane Austen's niece.

James Austen, Jane's eldest brother, is better known for his interest in writing and poetry than in art, but while at St. John's College, Oxford, he had drawing lessons from the landscape artist and musician, John Malchair. Thirty years later, in September 1819, three months before his death, James's interest in drawing was rekindled when he met a young drawing tutor, a Mr Sergeant, whom he invited to stay at Steventon for a week, ostensibly to give lessons to his 14 year-old daughter, Caroline. From Caroline's account in her *Reminiscences*, however, it appears that James engaged Mr Sergeant more to help him take his mind off his illness.¹

[My father] had a great natural taste for drawing, and he had practised it a little in his youth, but I had scarcely ever before seen him with a pencil in his hand. Now he took it up again, with the help of the young artist, who was very obliging with advice and assistance; and from this time he continued so to amuse himself, chiefly with Indian ink sketches as long as he was able to hold the brush.²

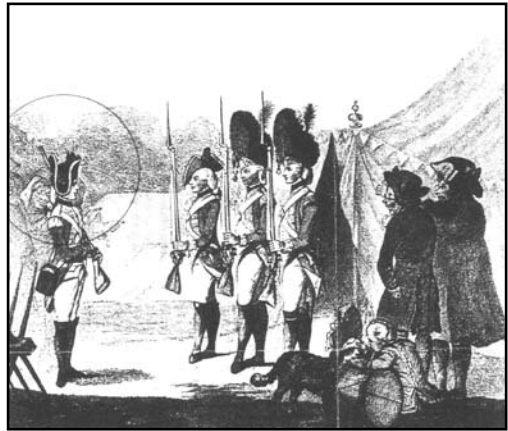
These sketches, if they were landscapes, were presumably of the area adjoining Steventon rectory as James would have been too ill to walk far. Although none has survived,* Deirdre Le Faye suggests that his sketches could have been copied by his descendants which might explain the differing extant versions of some of the buildings.³

James was not the only brother interested in art. Henry Austen, reputedly Jane's favourite brother, was considered by the family to be talented at drawing and in a postscript to a letter to Cassandra in 1805, Jane requests Cassandra to 'bring back...Henry's picture of Rowling [Edward Knight's first home after his marriage] for the M^{rs} Finches'.⁴ And it was Henry who mentioned Jane's talent for art, in his 'Biographical Notice of the Author' of 1818: 'Our authoress...had not only an excellent taste for drawing, but, in her earlier days, evinced great power of hand in the management of the pencil.'⁵

**[I have seen sketches in a family collection which, though unsigned, may well be by James Austen. – Ed.]*

It is Cassandra Austen, however, who is best known as the artist of the family and whose paintings illustrate almost every Jane Austen biography ever written. Cassandra was the recipient of Jane's undivided love and respect, and as the first-born daughter, would have enjoyed the status of being called Miss Austen. But why has none of her letters to Jane survived? Was there a reason for the family placing such importance on her painting skills? Might not James, Henry and Jane have been just as talented?

The earliest examples of Cassandra's art are the thirteen cheeky medallion caricatures of kings and queens of England which she painted in 1791, aged eighteen. These pictures accompany Jane Austen's *The History of England*, the only work of Jane's to have been illustrated in her lifetime. Two of the faces have been identified as copies of works by W.H. Bunbury:⁶ Henry V from *The Relief*, 1781, and Edward IV from *Recruits*, 1780.⁷



Left: W.H. Bunbury, 'Recruits', 1780.

Top right: 'The Relief', 1781.

Cassandra later proved to be quite an adept copyist. Each picture is signed 'C.E. Austen pinx.' in accordance, no doubt, with the mock seriousness of the work which the author acknowledged to be by 'a partial, prejudiced, and ignorant Historian'⁸ but which is a brilliant parody of the standard historical reference of the time, Goldsmith's 1771 four-volume epic, *The History of England*.

The next extant watercolour of Cassandra's, signed C.E.A., was painted about thirteen years later, in 1804, and is a full-length painting of Jane Austen, seen from behind, seated outdoors. This painting is still in family ownership. How many paintings Cassandra may have completed between 1791 and 1804 is sadly only a matter of conjecture.



Cassandra's 1804 watercolour of Jane



Cassandra's 1805 watercolour of her niece Fanny Austen

On 3 September, 1805, Cassandra's niece Fanny Austen (later Fanny Knight) mentions in her diary that 'Aunt C. took my likeness'⁹ and it can be safely assumed that she was referring to the unsigned watercolour of herself seated at a table painting a picture. This watercolour captures Fanny's youthful grace, and the slight awkwardness of the chair's perspective allows a pleasing depiction of its elegant outline. The painting is preserved in Jane Austen's House in Chawton.

Cassandra's best known painting, which now resides in the National Portrait Gallery in London, is her unsigned, unfinished watercolour sketch of Jane, painted around 1810 which her niece, Anna Lefroy, described as 'so hideously unlike'.¹⁰



Cassandra's unfinished painting of her sister Jane



Watercolour miniature by James Andrews



Steel engraving by Lizars commissioned for the Memoir

In about 1869 James Andrews painted a watercolour miniature of Jane based on Cassandra's painting and this in turn was used for the steel engraving by Lizars which James Edward Austen-Leigh commissioned for his *A Memoir of Jane Austen*. After the publication of the first edition of the *Memoir*, on 16 December 1869, Caroline Austen, Anna's half-sister, made the following comment to her brother, James Edward:

The portrait is better than I expected – considering its early date, and that it has lately passed through the hands of painter and engraver – I did not reckon upon finding *any* likeness – but there is a *look* which I recognise as *hers* – and though the general resemblance is *not* strong, yet as it represents a pleasant countenance it is *so far* a truth – & I am not dissatisfied with it.¹¹

There is an unsigned portrait of Caroline Austen, probably painted by her Aunt Cassandra in about 1815, when Caroline was ten years old. It was owned by the later Joan Austen-Leigh and is now in the possession of her daughter, Freydis Welland, in Canada.



Cassandra's drawing of her niece, Caroline Austen

Many biographies contain a miniature of James Austen (Caroline's father), painted when he was about 25 around 1790.¹² This has been attributed by some to Cassandra, although the level of expertise would suggest a more skilful hand and could have been the work of one of James's Oxford associates.



Miniature of James Austen

One step even further into the realm of uncertainty brings us to an unsigned sketch, executed in about 1815, of James's daughter Anna as a young bride; the original has been lost and only a copy remains in Jane Austen's House at Chawton.¹³



Anna Lefroy as a young wife

Tempting as it may be to attribute this painting to Cassandra, who after all *did* paint family pictures, the degree of expertise again suggests a more skilful hand and it is

far more likely to have been the work of some minor artist to celebrate Anna's marriage.¹³ The picture certainly captures a sweetness and gentleness in her nature that coexisted with what her Aunt Jane described as 'much unsteadiness' – for Anna, like her Aunt Jane before her, also quite suddenly broke off an engagement to be married.

There is an intriguing painting on page 48 of Maggie Lane's colourfully illustrated book *Jane Austen's World* – a picture that might well have been by Sir Joshua Reynolds himself of a girl, a dog and a fife – a little reminiscent of Reynolds's *Miss Bowles*. The caption reads: 'Painting by Cassandra of a lady with a musical instrument. Both music and art were prized female accomplishments.'¹⁴ If Cassandra Austen had *really* painted this picture, she was truly a gifted artist, but as it does not resemble any of her other paintings, her watercolours of Jane and Fanny Knight for instance, it seemed very suspicious! An email to Maggie Lane produced the following response: 'The picture research was done by the publisher, and I'm afraid I don't feel qualified to answer your fascinating questions! But the person who comes to mind as THE expert on this picture is David Gilson (author of the marvellous *Bibliography* of JA).'¹⁵ Replying to my inquiries, David Gilson wrote: The painting reproduced on p.48 of Maggie Lane's 1996 book *Jane Austen's World* is so professional in its finish as to be immediately suspect as regards any attribution to the novelist's sister Cassandra Austen.... I must admit to being puzzled that Maggie Lane should in effect deny responsibility for its use in her book, and also claim to know very little about it, since I had set out ... what I believe the picture really is, in some detail in my article 'Cassandra Austen's

Pictures', pp.17–19 of the Jane Austen Society's *Report* for 1993. The painting (not in fact a painting at all, but, as far as I can tell, a print coloured by hand in watercolour, and thus most certainly not in oils) is preserved at Jane Austen's House.... You ask when Cassandra could have painted the picture. As I record in my article, it is signed with the initials C.E.A. and dated 1808 (this is more than slightly ingenuous since the dated initials might be taken to imply that it is an original work, which as far as I know it is not.)'¹⁶ The same picture, again with incorrect labelling, appears in the 1973 paperback edition of Elizabeth Jenkins's biography of Jane Austen.¹⁷ In this reproduction, the name *Maria* is visible on the frame and the initials C.E.A. and the date 1808 appear in the bottom left-hand corner of the border.

In the same article, 'Cassandra Austen's pictures',¹⁹ David Gilson also wrote that the picture could now be identified as 'a stipple engraving by Peltro William Tomkins (1760 – 1840), published in 1792, after an undated pastel painting by the artist John Russell (1745 – 1806) representing the character Maria from Laurence Sterne's novel *A Sentimental Journey* (first published in 1768) ... it seems likely that Cassandra has tinted a monochrome example of the print in the colours she used in [other pictures].' John Russell was a portrait painter to both George III and the Prince Regent and exhibited over 330 works at the Royal Academy. He was a pioneer of pastel portraiture in an age when portraits were almost exclusively in oils. The techniques he developed with pastel have enabled his paintings to survive over the past two centuries.



*Pietro William Tomkins,
stipple engraving*



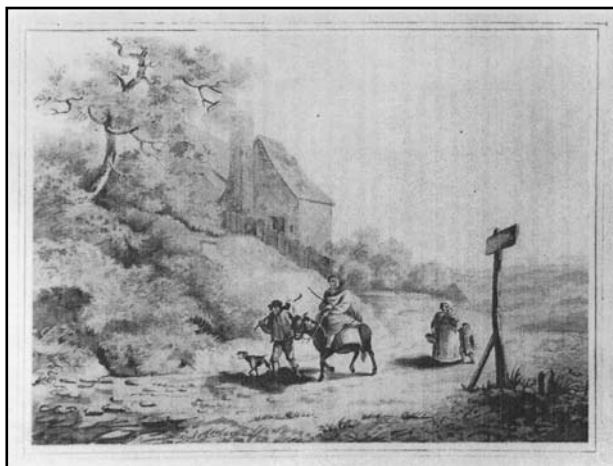
John Russell, pastel

In addition to John Russell's *Maria* there are apparently two other drawings in watercolour signed by Cassandra and dated 1804. These are based on engravings by R.S. Syer, published in 1801, of works by George Morland, entitled *The Alehouse*

Door and *The Alehouse Kitchen*, which were sold by auction at Sotheby's London on 28 November, 1972. David Gilson was able to discover the purchaser's name but their whereabouts are not known.¹⁸

George Morland must have been a favourite artist of Cassandra since there is another watercolour by her, dated 1808, taken from an engraving by James Fittler of Morland's *Pedlars*, mostly in colours similar to the brown tones of *Maria*. A prodigious artist, Morland first exhibited paintings at the Royal Academy at the tender age of ten. He was renowned for his paintings of animals, landscapes and rustic scenes, many of which were engraved. Cassandra's watercolour version of *Pedlars* is privately owned.

*Watercolour by
Cassandra after an
engraving by James
Fittler of Pedlars by
George Morland*



Regardless of her limited artistic talent, we have Cassandra to thank for the delightful illustrations in *The History of England* and for the only authentic portrait in existence of Jane Austen.

The drawing involvement of the Austen family's next generation is even more blurred since all that exists is a series of largely unsigned and undated sketches and paintings. The drawings attributed to Anna Lefroy appearing in numerous biographies remain the biggest puzzle of all.

In 1805 Jane, Cassandra, their mother and twelve-year old Anna visited the Knight family in Kent following the death of Jane's father. During this sojourn Cassandra painted the watercolour of Fanny Knight sketching a picture, implying that Fanny would have been receiving drawing tuition. Could Anna also have had some drawing lessons with her cousin Fanny during this visit? Jane Anna Elizabeth Austen, known as 'Anna', was the daughter of James and his first wife, Anne Mathew, and in 1814 married Benjamin Lefroy, son of Jane Austen's friend and mentor, Anne Lefroy and the Revd Isaac Peter George Lefroy. Born in 1793 and only three months younger than Fanny Knight, Anna spent much of her early childhood in Steventon rectory after her mother died. Precocious as a child and raised on Jane's novels, she was later considered to be Jane Austen's literary heir. But Anna had also inherited another Austen trait – the ability to draw. Or had she?

The well-known sketches of the front and rear views of Steventon rectory attributed to Anna display a command of perspective, particularly in the rear view, which would suggest that the artist had at least some guidance. Financial constraints and the isolation of rural Hampshire, however, would have made formal instruction for Anna quite difficult and, according to her daughter, Fanny Caroline Lefroy, it would appear that Anna's father, James, did not have Anna taught the usual female accomplishments: 'He himself educated her and did it very well both as to French and English ... but no accomplishments were given to her, she had a very sweet voice and a good ear but she never learnt music.'¹⁹



Steventon rectory (Rectory now pulled down)



Rear view of Steventon Rectory 1814

When I studied the sketches and paintings attributed to Anna, several questions arose for which a satisfactory answer seemed elusive. For example, why did Anna's half-brother, James Edward Austen-Leigh not use her skilfully drawn sketch of Steventon rectory for the *Memoir*? It would have been authentic considering Anna had spent much of her childhood there. And why is the engraving in the *Memoir* so different from Anna's sketch? The size of the building, its elevation and the number of windows and chimneys suggest two quite different buildings. And again, why is there a watercolour version of the rectory which includes several figures and two cows grazing by the side of the road which are not in the original sketch? Helen Lefroy's response to this last query was interesting: 'Reasonable to expect Anna to have made several drawings of what after all was her home. What did young girls do all day in the country?'²⁰

The mystery intensified when I discovered an extraordinary passage in Deirdre Le Faye's *A Family Record* which included a quotation from a letter which Anna wrote to JEAL on 20 July 1869, concerning pictures for the *Memoir*:

Steventon rectory itself had been demolished by Edward Knight in the early 1820s ... so for an illustration of Jane's birthplace Anna provided 'a little drawing of Julia's [her second daughter] made from my description of the Parsonage: more pretty than true: yet, some thing perhaps might be made of it...' This joint composition formed the basis for the engraving of Steventon rectory used in the *Memoir*, and Anna added a note to the drawing in her possession: 'The Door should have more Glass, & less wood work – The Windows were Casements.'²¹

Why would Anna send JEAL an inaccurate 'little drawing' produced by her daughter Julia, who would have been too young to recall the building accurately and was only drawing from her mother's verbal description many years after the rectory's demolition? Why didn't Anna send him her own sketch?



Engraving of Steventon Rectory used in the Memoir

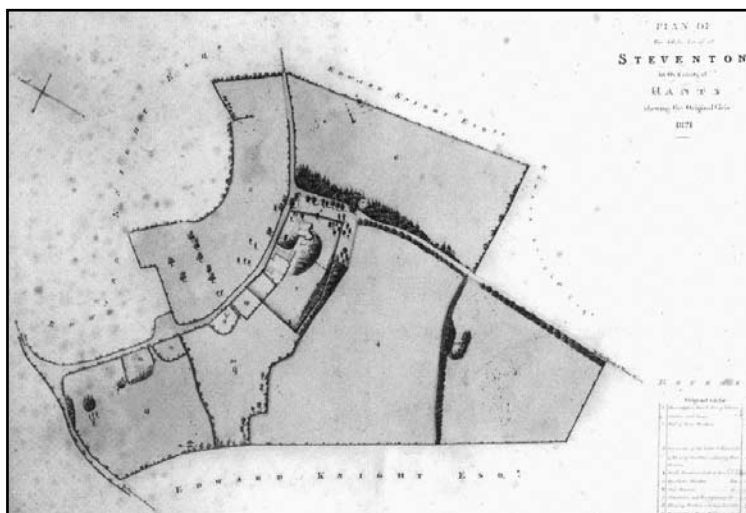
One way to solve the mystery was to locate the originals – a little difficult from Australia. My research took a new turn when I contacted Deirdre Le Faye herself, who explained that most of the pictures attributed to Anna are either in a ‘black-covered quarto MS’ book preserved in Chawton Cottage or in an MS book with a ‘red leather cover’, called the ‘Lefroy Manuscript’, owned by descendants of Admiral Sir Francis Austen. The untitled black book watermarked 1835, contains a collection of James Austen’s verses and three rather faded watercolours of Steventon, which have been loosely tucked in: two of some cottages and one of the north side of Steventon church. Of more interest are four pencil sketches, labelled by Anna, which have been lightly stuck onto the manuscript. These are a rather crudely drawn picture *Rectory House, now pulled down* (the northeast view of the rectory), *Steventon from high ground near Burley Lane, looking east*, *Steventon Manor House* and *Cottages now pulled down*. The manuscript bears the watermark 1835 but this is of little help in dating the pictures as they were not drawn onto the paper itself.²² With Anna’s labelling below, however, it would be natural to assume that she was the artist. The second document, the Lefroy MS, watermarked 1854, contains Anna’s attempt at writing a family history. Several sketches have been drawn directly onto the pages, dating them 1854 or after, although some or even all could be copies of pre-existing drawings. The *Old Church at Deane*, for example, must be a copy of an earlier sketch as it shows the church before its rebuilding in 1818-1820. The labelling below is in Julia’s hand. Evidence for Julia Cassandra Lefroy, Anna’s daughter, as the artist, or rather the copyist or improver of these drawings, strengthens, particularly as the Lefroy MS contains the ‘little drawing’ of the north front view of the rectory, done directly onto the manuscript by Julia with Anna’s guidance which JEAL used for the *Memoir*. The Lefroy MS also includes an improved version of the faded watercolour *Cottages at Steventon*, sketches of the old Chawton Church (used in the *Memoir*), the Steventon Manor House (used in the *Memoir*), and a small engraving, lightly stuck in, of Chawton Great House. Deirdre Le Faye suggests:

As Julia didn’t marry until 1861 [at the age of 45] while she was living at home with Anna she helped with drawings for her mother’s MS for some six years from ca 1854 onwards; and it would seem that hers is the more skilful hand which copied in and improved earlier drawings presumably made by Anna ... I conclude that Anna actually sent her whole book to JEAL, with this letter of 20 July, 1869 accompanying it; he ... had the drawings copied by Wimperis and then engraved by Pearson, and thereafter returned the volume to Anna.²³

If this is correct, and only the Lefroy manuscript was sent to JEAL and subsequently to Wimperis and Pearson for the *Memoir*, it would explain why ‘Rectory now pulled down’ was not used. More important than authenticity to him would have been to present a respectable, imposing view of the building, and for this reason Julia’s little sketch would have sufficed. As Helen Lefroy said:

It would not I suggest have seemed all that important to give more than an agreeable view of the old house: the text would have been important and [JEAL] may not have even checked the illustrations until the book was printed.’²⁴

The familiar sketch of the rear view of the rectory, labelled *Back of Steventon Rectory* 1814 – but not in Anna’s handwriting – appears in neither book. The word ‘back’ is a correction as originally ‘front’ had been written and then crossed out, implying that the artist was copying an earlier, untitled sketch and was unfamiliar with the building. The writing corresponds to Julia’s neat hand. The original pencil drawing is owned by the Jane Austen Memorial Trust and is framed and on display at Chawton. But who drew the familiar pencil sketch *Rectory now pulled down*, so often attributed to Anna, and is it the front or side view of the rectory? The building stood on a corner of two lanes, one leading to Deane and the other to the Steventon church, suggesting that Julia’s ‘little drawing’, with the extra windows and chimney, is the front view and the sketch attributed to Anna the side view. The glebe plan of 1821 orientates the building with the rear wings facing south.



Glebe map of 1821 of Steventon rectory

The roof ridge and driveway alignments suggest the aspect of both drawings to be northerly: the pencil sketch from the northeast and Julia’s drawing from the northwest.



Detail from 1821 glebe map (approximate roof ridge lines superimposed) with sketches of the north-eastern and southern aspects of Steventon rectory

The sketch of the north eastern view of the rectory in the black-covered quarto MS book is crudely drawn in dark pencil and would suggest that this was not the same artist who painted the almost identical watercolour contained in the large scrap book JEAL compiled which is now owned by Freydis Welland in Canada. All the evidence seems to point to JEAL himself for the watercolour, as he was quite a proficient artist and had probably received drawing instruction at school. His writing, 'Steventon Parsonage', has also been identified below the watercolour original. There is an even more compelling reason to attribute the painting to JEAL, for in the far right hand corner is a distant female figure with a donkey, and there are several other figures and two cows grazing by the side of the path. No other Austen family drawings of buildings mentioned so far contain figures or animals. JEAL was an expert at cutting silhouettes of animals, and he also drew them, so it is reasonable to assume that he enjoyed having them in his pictures, and that the watercolour was probably copied from the pencil sketch. By choosing Julia's 'little drawing' of the rectory instead of his own sketch, JEAL could acknowledge Anna and her family's assistance in compiling information for the *Memoir* and also maintain stylistic consistency with pictures only from the Lefroy MS. A recent visit to Chawton Cottage by Deirdre Le Faye, however, revealed a most surprising discovery. In addition to the framed pencil sketch of the rear view of the rectory which was most likely Julia's copy of an earlier sketch, there is another original pencil sketch, also framed, of *Rectory now pulled down*, containing the woman with the donkey in the far right corner but without the other animals or figures. This, and not the crude sketch in the MS of James Austen's verses, is the familiar one, copies of which appear in the biographies. In microscopic writing near the bottom of the frame, Deirdre Le Faye discovered a signature and date.



Steventon Parsonage (watercolour)

To quote from her email:

Tom Carpenter took the picture down from the wall, and together we looked at it with a magnifying glass, and it reads: B. Lefroy Steventon 1820. So there is no doubt as to the artist and date for this one, at least.

So the artist is not Anna, not JEAL but Ben Lefroy, Anna's husband. Little wonder that Anna and Ben's daughter, Julia, was artistic as she had inherited drawing talent from both sides of the family. Deirdre Le Faye continues:

I would guess that Ben and Anna visited Steventon after Henry Austen had taken over as rector, perhaps to introduce themselves to his new wife, Eleanor Jackson, whom he married in April 1820 ... Having identified the ... pencil drawing as being by Ben Lefroy and done in 1820, it strikes me that the water-coloured version ... may also be by him and of the same date. Although it is titled 'Steventon Parsonage' in JEAL's hand, it might have been given to him by Ben, not drawn by him. Apart from the figures, the details of the house itself, and the surrounding trees, seem to be identical – no sign of difference of season or passage of time ... [The crude sketch of Rectory house now pulled down in the black manuscript] is evidently a copy of Ben's 1820 drawing.²⁵

In 1817, Anna and Ben moved to rooms in a large house, Wyards, near Chawton, and some biographers have attributed a watercolour of Wyards to Anna. Helen Lefroy's comment here is invaluable:

This watercolour belonged to my godmother, or one of her sisters [Anna's

grandchildren] and at her death became mine. There is no trace of the artist's name anywhere. For what it is worth, my view is that it may have been a Victorian painting, or possibly an early work of Mary Isabel Lefroy, one of Anna's grandchildren, who went to art school and was the artistic member of the family.²⁶



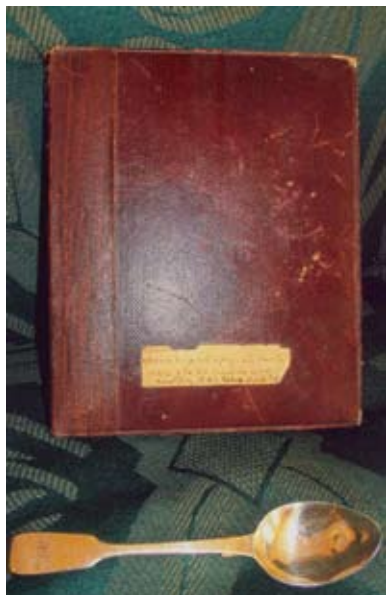
*Mary Isabel
Lefroy[?], Wyards
(watercolour)*

A watercolour of Chawton Cottage belonging to the Canadian branch of the family, along with JEAL's *Steventon Parsonage* watercolour, has also been incorrectly attributed to Anna. Unlike the strong, crisp outlines of Ben Lefroy's painting of *Steventon Parsonage*, however, the effect here is soft, almost impressionistic, and tinged with touches of mauve – a colour which became popular later in the nineteenth century. But the incidental figures and their poses, the ducks in the foreground and the playful little dog have a lot in common with the *Steventon Parsonage* watercolour. Perhaps *this* is a painting by JEAL.



Watercolour of Chawton which has been attributed to Anna Lefroy

Ben Lefroy died in 1829, leaving Anna with seven children. Two pictures survive of Anna Lefroy, one as a young bride, the other as a widow. The latter was painted in 1845 by R.H.C. Ubsdell, a watercolour artist and archaeologist. It occupies a colour page in David Cecil's *A Portrait of Jane Austen*,²⁷ and suggests a large portrait solemnly surveying the viewer from the wall of a great hall. The original in fact, is an exquisite little painting about the size of a teaspoon, mounted behind glass in a small leather case, and is owned by the Lefroy Archive.



The leather case and portrait of Anna in relation to the size of a teaspoon

With no dates or signatures for guidance, it is impossible to state categorically who sketched or painted most of the extant pictures associated with Austen family members. The artistic talent seen in Jane Austen's generation filtered down through subsequent generations and was particularly apparent in the descendants of James Austen, but it would appear that Anna herself had very little to do with drawing. Most pictures attributed to her were probably by someone else or finished or improved by her daughter Julia. Anna's legacy, however, is twofold. In addition to correspondence with her aunt which gives an invaluable insight into Jane Austen's ideas about novel writing, Anna also kept a record in her manuscripts of many of the buildings important to the Austen family, allowing us a brief but privileged glimpse into their world in the days before photography.

Notes

- 1 Deirdre Le Faye, *A Chronology of Jane Austen and her Family* (Cambridge, 2006), entry for September 1819, p. 601.
- 2 *Reminiscences of Caroline Austen* ed. Deirdre Le Faye (Chawton, 1986).
- 3 Deirdre Le Faye, email 27 August 2008.
- 4 Deirdre Le Faye, ed., *Jane Austen's Letters* No.45 24th August 1805.
- 5 Henry Austen, *Biographical Notice of the Author* (1818).
- 6 Deirdre Le Faye, *A Chronology of Jane Austen*, p. 138.
- 7 Jane Austen, *The History of England*, Introduction by Jan Fergus (University of Alberta, 1995), pp. ii-iii.
- 8 Jane Austen, *The History of England* (Everyman's Library, 1996), p.359.
- 9 Deirdre Le Faye, *A Chronology of Jane Austen*, p. 318.
- 10 Deirdre Le Faye, *Jane Austen: A Family Record* (2nd edn, Cambridge, 2004), p. 80.
- 11 Undated letter from Caroline Austen to James Edward Austen Leigh, written after the publication of the first edition of the *Memoir* on 16 December, 1869. Kathryn Sutherland, ed., *A Memoir of Jane Austen and Other Family Recollections* (Oxford, 2002), Appendix, p. 192.
- 12 See picture no. 9 between pages 148 and 149 of Jon Spence's *Becoming Jane Austen* as an example.
- 13 Helen Lefroy, letter 18 April 2008. Tom Carpenter tells me this is a copy. Who has the original?
- 14 Deirdre Le Faye, email 15 September 2008.
- 15 Maggie Lane, *Jane Austen's World The Life and Times of England's Most Popular Author* (Carlton, 1997).
- 16 Maggie Lane, email 23 October 2007.
- 17 David Gilson, letter 5 November 2007.
- 18 Elizabeth Jenkins, *Jane Austen* (Cardinal edn, 1973, Sphere).
- 19 David Gilson, 'Cassandra Austen's Pictures', *Collected Reports*, vol. 4, pp. 299-301.
- 20 David Gilson, Letters to the Editor: 'Cassandra Austen's pictures', The Jane Austen Society *NewsLetter* No.12, March 1999, and No.15, October 2000.
- 21 Fanny Caroline Lefroy, Family History, Hampshire Record Office.
- 22 Helen Lefroy, letter 18 April 2008.
- 23 Deirdre Le Faye, *A Family Record*, p. 280.
- 24 Deirdre Le Faye, letter 27 August 2008.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Helen Lefroy, letter 22 February 2008.
- 27 Deirdre Le Faye, email 3 October 2008.
- 28 Helen Lefroy, letter 18 April 2008.
- 29 David Cecil, *A Portrait of Jane Austen* (Constable, 1978).

The Austens and travel in Europe

David Gilson

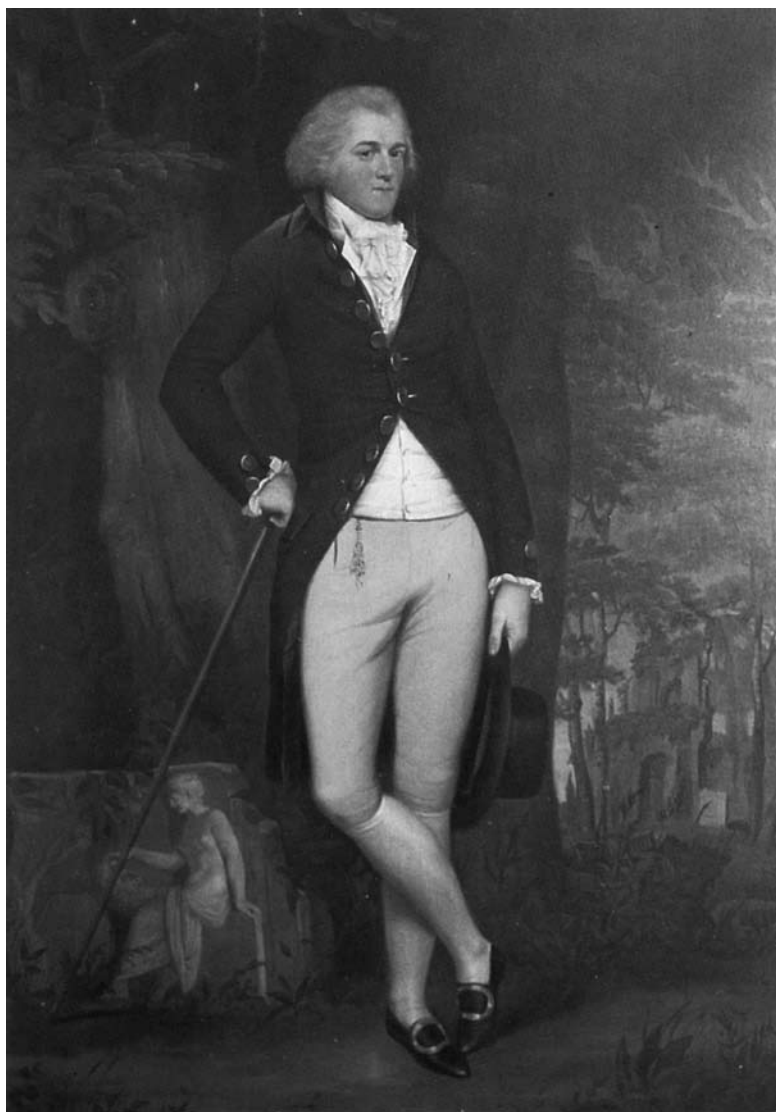
When Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey*¹ tells Henry Tilney that Beechen Cliff in Bath reminds her of the South of France, Henry is justified in asking with surprise ‘You have been abroad then ?’ since apart from some adventurous and wealthy ladies such as Lady Hester Stanhope, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Elizabeth, Lady Craven (Margravine of Anspach), travel in the eighteenth century was undertaken almost exclusively by men. Catherine has to admit that she has never left England and knows the South of France only from Mrs Radcliffe’s descriptions in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Frank Churchill in *Emma* indeed speaks of going to ‘Swisserland’ (‘As soon as my aunt gets well, I shall go abroad’, he says²) ; but Emma wisely says ‘You will never go to Swisserland. Your aunt and uncle will never allow you to leave England’³ and even when Mrs. Churchill is dead and Frank’s more manageable uncle agrees to his marriage to Jane Fairfax, there is no more talk of foreign travel.

Jane Austen’s sailor brothers of course travelled far and wide by sea, but we do not hear of them in Europe. Sir Francis Hastings Doyle tells a romantic tale of a visit by Jane Austen, her sister Cassandra and their father the Revd George Austen to Switzerland after the Peace of Amiens in 1802, and of Jane’s alleged romance with a young naval officer met in that country, but the whole story is unfortunately a myth.⁴

Jane Austen’s brother James (1765-1819) did indeed visit France in 1786 to see his cousin Eliza de Feuillide and her husband Jean François Capot de Feuillide in their estates in Guienne, and is believed to have stayed on the Continent for about a year, also visiting Spain and Holland. James’s ‘Prologue to the Tragedy of Tom Thumb’⁵ includes mentions of France, Spain and Holland, and it has been suggested by George Holbert Tucker that some lines in this poem may refer to James’s visit to a bull fight at Pamplona in Spain in 1787.⁶

Jane Austen’s brother Henry (1771-1850) also planned to travel to France in 1788 with Eliza de Feuillide and her mother, but was prevented from going. Later, after his marriage in 1797 to the widowed Eliza, the couple did in fact go to France at the Peace of Amiens in 1802 in the hope of recovering some of the property of Monsieur de Feuillide, who had been guillotined in 1794, but they were unsuccessful, and Henry returned alone to England in the Spring of 1803, Eliza only succeeding in later escaping from France at the breaking of the Peace, because of her fluent French. After Eliza’s death in 1813, Henry went back to France in 1816, in a fresh attempt to recover some of the Feuillide property, but was presumably again unsuccessful. Neither of these trips could be described as travelling for pleasure, nor could Henry’s visit to Germany in 1818-1819, where he served for a time as Chaplain to the British Embassy in Berlin.

James Austen in *The Loiterer* tells of the dispersal of Oxford students after four



Edward Knight, c. 1789 (The Jane Austen Society)

years of study: some to make the Grand Tour, some to be Members of Parliament, and some to take possession of their estates, become fathers of families, &c.⁷ 'The Grand Tour' was an expression first found in a printed work, Richard Lassels's *Voyage of Italy*, 1760 (quoted by Christopher Hibbert)⁸, used to describe a period of travel and study on the Continent for young gentlemen of fortune, to supplement, or provide an alternative to, a university education, generally in the company of a tutor or travelling companion of some kind. As an example, Chris Viveash's 2006

biography of James Stanier Clarke tells how the poet William Hayley exhorted Clarke to travel abroad ‘to acquire those gentlemanly manners and deportment necessary to attract attention and possibly advancement’;⁹ Clarke duly set off in June 1792 as tutor and mentor to two young men, visiting The Hague, Rotterdam, Coblenz and Geneva, while in the summer of 1793 his brother Edward Daniel was in Italy with Lord Berwick, visiting Turin, Florence, Rome and Naples, no doubt acquiring pictures and antiquities for Lord Berwick’s mansion of Attingham in Shropshire. The normal itinerary for such a tour comprised a visit of some length to Paris, followed by travel south through France and over the Alps to Italy, with a tour of the principal cities, namely Rome, Venice, Florence and Naples, although many travellers took in also the Low Countries, Germany and Switzerland, especially as the years passed and roads and modes of transport improved, wars and changes in the political situation permitting. Jane Austen herself was aware of such travels; in her story ‘Lesley Castle’, written in about 1792, Margaret Lesley says that her brother ‘is already in Paris. He intends to quit it in a few Days and to begin his route to Italy.’¹⁰

Jane Austen’s brother Edward (1767-1852), after his adoption by rich relations, the Knights of Godmersham in Kent, did not have a university education; in this he resembled Frank Churchill in *Emma*, adopted by his maternal uncle and aunt, the Churchills of Enscombe in Yorkshire, whose name he took, but unlike Frank Churchill he was sent off on a Grand Tour. He was the only one of Jane Austen’s siblings who can be said to have travelled in Europe solely for pleasure and for cultural purposes. The book *Chawton Manor and Its Owners* tells of Edward’s having spent a year in Dresden, where he was received at the court of the King of Saxony;¹¹ but the recent discovery and publication of two of his travel journals have provided more details of his Grand Tour.

The first of these journals¹² describes a tour of Switzerland from 5 to 31 August 1786, while the second¹³ covers Edward’s travels from Genoa through Switzerland and Germany to The Hague, 1 June to 31 July 1790, presumably as the traveller was on his way home at the end of his Grand Tour. The two journals have been transcribed, edited and introduced by Jon Spence, and published in 2005 by the Jane Austen Society of Australia, under the title *Jane Austen’s Brother Abroad: the Grand Tour Journals of Edward Austen*.¹⁴ Professor Spence throws doubt¹⁵ on the possible existence of other journals covering the period between 31 August 1786 and 1 June 1790, but I feel that the writer who describes other foreign parts in such detail is most unlikely to have left undocumented his reactions especially to Italy’s major cities. Edward must surely have visited Rome and Florence, and probably also Naples, while John Ingamells records¹⁶ from documents in the Archivio di Stato di Venezia, the arrival in Venice on 23 December 1789 of a certain Eduardo Austen, who seems likely to be Jane Austen’s brother (were the ‘views of St. Mark’s Place, Venice’, mentioned in *Emma*,¹⁷ Edward’s souvenirs of his visit to Venice in 1789?).

Mrs George Austen, Edward’s mother, writing to Mrs Leigh Perrot on 4th January 1820, described her son as a man of business with an active mind, clear

head and sound judgement, but with no pretensions to classical knowledge, literary taste or the power of elegant composition;¹⁸ but Edward's Grand Tour journals show him as having an intelligent interest in art, history, geography and the world about him.

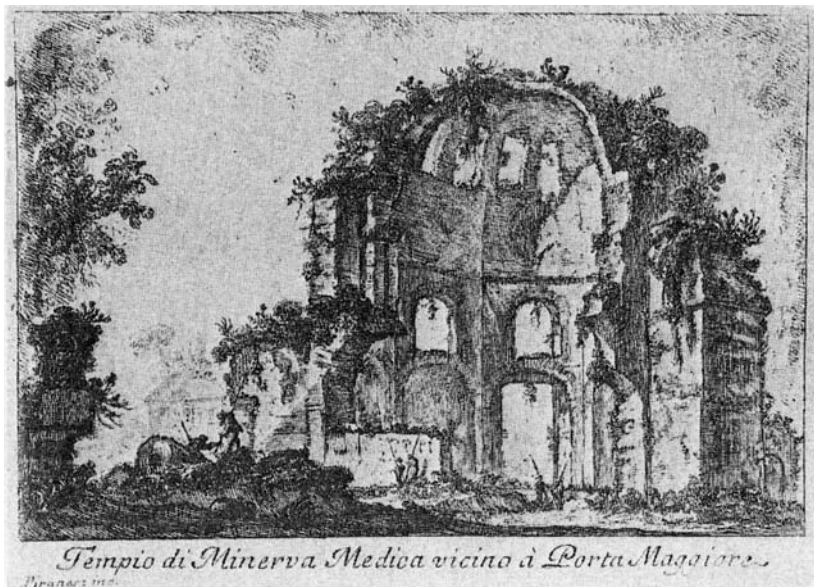
The Swiss journal describes scenery, local customs, churches, and places associated with William Tell; in Zurich Edward visited the poet Salomon Gessner and the physiognomist Johann Kaspar Lavater, as well as a porcelain manufactory where he 'bought two small medals' of these two distinguished men. In Basle Edward looked for the tomb of Erasmus in the Cathedral and bought 'a small number of Swiss prints'²⁰ (were these the 'views in Swisserland' at which Frank Churchill and Emma were looking, in *Emma*?²¹).

It would appear that Edward was accompanied on his travels not by an English travelling tutor or bear-leader, but by a certain Monsieur Meuron of Neuchâtel, together with a small group of other young Englishmen, including John Stanley, later first Baron Stanley of Alderley (1766-1850). Edward's death in 1852 was mentioned by Maria Josepha, Lady Stanley, widow of John Stanley, in a letter where Edward is described as the last but one remaining of her husband's early friends.

It has been suggested that after the 1786 Swiss tour Edward returned to Neuchâtel and studied there before spending a year in Dresden, but the 1786 journal does not make this clear, and the dates of the stay in Dresden are nowhere stated. We do not know exactly when Edward set out for Switzerland in 1786, although it may be supposed that he would first have spent some time in Paris before travelling south to Switzerland. Christine Penney's 'Notes on Sales', p. 61 of the Jane Austen Society's *Report* for 1998, include a copy of Nathaniel Wraxall's *A Tour through the Western, Southern and Interior Provinces of France*, 1784, from the Chawton House library, which could have belonged to Edward. The same writer also published in 1799 a volume entitled *Memoirs of the Courts of Berlin, Dresden, Warsaw and Vienna in the Years 1777, 1778, and 1779*, which would have been of interest to Edward. If we accept that he spent the year 1787 in Dresden, this would leave 1788 and most of 1789 for visits to Florence and Rome. This time scheme is not that of Jon Spence, who suggests instead that Edward remained in Neuchâtel for two years, not leaving until the summer of 1788 when he proceeded to Dresden. If Edward then studied for a year in Dresden he would have had little time for visits to Florence and Rome before he left for Venice, where we have reason to suppose he arrived in December 1789.

We do not know what Edward saw and did when in Rome, but it is probable that he would have done what Grand Tour visitors before and after him did, which was to have his portrait painted as a souvenir of his visit. The most in demand of all portrait painters working in Rome in the eighteenth century was Pompeo Batoni.²³ Jeremy Black records that Batoni is known to have painted 154 portraits of British tourists,²⁴ of which some particularly grand specimens were exhibited in London at the National Gallery, 20 February to 18 May 2008. Since Batoni (born 1708) died in 1787, he could not have been responsible for Edward's portrait

(which in any case lacks Batoni's panache); but there were other artists active in Rome who could paint portraits in the manner of Batoni much more cheaply. Christopher Hibbert quotes the case of a young Scottish artist resident in Rome, George Willison, who charged far less than Batoni (e.g. £15 for a half-length portrait of James Boswell now in the National Portrait Gallery of Scotland).²⁵ The unsigned portrait of Edward Austen follows the usual pattern of such portraits in that the subject, painted at full length, is depicted against a background showing one or more monuments of classical antiquity; at his feet are a Corinthian capital and a segment of carved frieze with a seated figure, while in the background on the right is what has been identified as the so-called Temple of Minerva Medica, a fourth-century domed structure (of which the dome collapsed in 1828), the remains of which survive on the Via Giovanni Giolitti near Rome's central railway station. This is not one of Rome's more famous ancient buildings, but if Edward chose to have it represented in his portrait he may have known that its eighteenth-century appearance was recorded by the engraver Giovanni Battista Piranesi on at least three occasions, first in his *Varie vedute di Roma antica e moderna* of 1748. Topographical prints were among the cheapest and most portable souvenirs of the Eternal City, so that Edward could have taken home some specimens of these. If it had been painted in Rome, his portrait would have been despatched to England, probably by sea, as so many larger assemblages of paintings, classical sculpture &c were sent by Grand Tourists.



Temple of Minerva Medica

Edward, meanwhile, would have been setting out on his homeward journey, travelling from Venice to Genoa, and then recording in his second travel journal

the journey from Genoa to Turin, across the Alps into Germany and finally to the Low Countries, from which he would cross to England. The journal entries begin with 'We', but there is not generally any identification of travelling companions, except that on 12 July 1790 Edward left Neuchâtel in company with M. Meuron (his companion there in 1786), who accompanied him to The Hague, where he met again his friend John Stanley. It is noteworthy that in this second journal there is more historical and factual information, together with comments on paintings &c., especially in galleries in Genoa, Turin, Mannheim and Dusseldorf.

On Edward's return to England we may suppose that his Grand Tour portrait was first displayed at Godmersham. We learn from Nigel Nicolson that at his death in 1852 the house became the property of his eldest son, also Edward Knight (1794-1879),²⁶ Edward Austen having changed his surname to Knight in 1812; but Edward Knight junior was already resident at Chawton and did not choose to live at Godmersham. He sold the house in 1874, but the portrait had probably been transferred to Chawton House in the 1850s; it is recorded as being there by Oscar Fay Adams²⁷ and again by Constance Hill,²⁶ who describes it as having been painted in Rome when Edward was twenty-one, i.e. in 1788.

An alternative, though remote, possibility is that the portrait was painted in England after Edward's return from the Grand Tour. Mr John Ingamells in his 1997 book refers to it as 'believed to have been painted in Rome'²⁹ but in a recent personal letter this authority changes his mind and is of the opinion that it 'was indeed not painted in Italy', while adding that Christopher Wright in a book of 2006 lists the portrait as 'British School'.³⁰ As I have said above, Edward could have brought home Piranesi prints of the Temple of Minerva Medica and asked the unknown artist to incorporate it in his portrait with the other classical remains.

The portrait's subsequent history may be traced from the Jane Austen Society's annual *Reports* and from a typescript memorandum dated 26 January 1953 composed by Lt. Col. C.R. Satterthwaite, joint Hon. Treasurer and Vice-Chairman of the Jane Austen Society. It was auctioned at Sotheby's in London, Lot 52 in a sale of pictures from Chawton House, the property of Major Edward Knight, on 3 December 1952, attributed to Romney; this attribution is now said to be unrealistic, but it is worth pointing out that there are parallels with Romney's full length portrait of William Beckford aged 21 in 1781, now in the possession of the National Trust at Upton House, Warwickshire, showing Beckford standing before what look like classical remains. Col. Satterthwaite bought the portrait of Edward in the 1952 sale for £24 (see the Society's *Report* for the year 1952, pp. 89); it was subsequently bought from him by the Jane Austen Society, but because its dimensions (8 ft. high. 5 ft. 6 in. wide) were such as to preclude its hanging in Jane Austen's House, Col. Satterthwaite offered to hang it temporarily in his own home, Lansdowne House, 74 High Street, Alton. Following Col. Satterthwaite's death in 1953, we find that in the *Report* for 1966 the portrait is described as hanging in the offices of the Alton U.D.C. At an uncertain later date the picture's original elaborate frame was removed, so as to reduce the size of the whole sufficiently to enable it to be hung at Jane Austen's House, where it is now to be seen.

Notes

- 1 Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, edited by R.W. Chapman, Oxford: Clarendon Press/Oxford University Press, 1923 and later printings, p. 106; edited by Barbara M. Benedict and Deirdre Le Faye, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 107.
- 2 Jane Austen, *Emma*, edited by R.W. Chapman, Oxford: Clarendon Press/Oxford University Press, 1923 and later printings, p.364; edited by Richard Cronin and Dorothy McMillan, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 396.
- 3 Jane Austen, *Emma*, *ibid.*, p. 365 and p. 396.
- 4 Sir Francis Hastings Doyle, *Reminiscences and Opinions*, London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1886, pp. 353-357.
- 5 James Austen, *The Complete Poems*, edited by David Selwyn, Chawton: The Jane Austen Society, 2003, pp. 23-26.
- 6 George Holbert Tucker, *A Goodly Heritage: a History of Jane Austen's Family*, Manchester: Carcanet New Press, 1983, p. 102.
- 7 James Austen, *The Loiterer*, No.11, 11 April 1789, Oxford, 1789, p. 10.
- 8 Christopher Hibbert, *The Grand Tour*, London: Methuen, 1987, p. 18.
- 9 Chris Viveash, *James Stanier Clarke*, privately printed, 2006, pp. 15 and 16.
- 10 Jane Austen, *Minor Works*, edited by R.W. Chapman, Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1954 and later printings, p.116 ; *Juvenilia*, edited by Peter Sabor, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 150 and Note 29.
- 11 William Austen Leigh and Montagu George Knight, *Chawton Manor and its Owners: a Family History*, London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1911, pp. 158 and 159.
- 12 Knight Archive, Hampshire Record Office.
- 13 Item 12 in Bernard Quaritch's Catalogue 1208, January 1996, subsequently acquired by the Beinecke Rare Book Library of Yale University in America.
- 14 Subsequently referred to as *Grand Tour Journals*.
- 15 *Grand Tour Journals*, p. 57.
- 16 John Ingamells, *A Dictionary of British and Irish Travellers in Italy, 1701-1800*, New Haven & London : Yale University Press, 1997, p. 38.
- 17 Jane Austen, *Emma*, as in Note 2, p. 363 and p. 394.
- 18 R.A. Austen-Leigh, ed., *Austen Papers, 1704-1856*, privately printed, 1942, p. 265.
- 19 *Grand Tour Journals*, p. 49.
- 20 *Ibid.*, pp. 53, 54.
- 21 Jane Austen, *Emma*, as in Note 2, p. 364 and p. 396.
- 22 Nancy Mitford, ed., *The Stanleys of Alderley: Letters between the Years 1851-1865*, London : Chapman and Hall, 1939, p. 66, Letter 91, 24 November 1852.
- 23 Hibbert, as in Note 8, p. 157.
- 24 Jeremy Black, *The British Abroad: the Grand Tour in the Eighteenth Century*, Stroud : Alan Sutton, 2002, p. 262. 25
- 25 Hibbert, as in Note 8, p. 181.
- 26 Nigel Nicolson, *Godmersham Park, Before, During and Since Jane Austen's Day*, Alton : Jane Austen Society, 1996, p. 27 onwards.

- 27 Oscar Fay Adams, *The Story of Jane Austen's Life*, new edition, Boston : Lee and Shepard, 1896, p. 227.
- 28 Constance Hill, *Jane Austen: Her Homes & Her Friends*, London: John Lane, 1902, p. 181.
- 29 John Ingamells, as in Note 16, p. 38.
- 30 Christopher Wright, *British and Irish Paintings in Public Collections*, New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 2006, p. 147.

With many thanks to Tom Carpenter for details of the history of Edward Austen's portrait, to John Ingamells for historical data, to Deirdre Le Faye for biographical information, and to Chris Viveash for other information and for references derived from the mystery of the internet.

'We suppose the Trial is to take place this week'

Clive Caplan

On Tuesday 9 July 1816 Jane Austen wrote to her nephew James Edward on his returning home to Steventon from school at Winchester. In her letter she commented: 'I suppose it is known at Steventon that Uncle Frank & Aunt Cassandra were to go to Town on some business of Uncle Henry's', and she also attached a note to her brother James, the boy's father and the rector of Steventon:

'My dear James

We suppose the Trial is to take place this week, but we only feel sure that it cannot have taken place yet because we have heard nothing of it. A letter from G^m today tells us that Henry as well as William K- goes to France with his uncle. –

Y^{rs} Ever – J.A.'

Can we discover this 'business of Uncle Henry's', which took Jane's brother Frank and her sister Cassandra to London? What trial did Jane mean? Why such close family interest? Thankfully for posterity, an account of the trial in question was published in the Law Reports section of *The Times* on Tuesday 16 July 1816, one week after Jane's letter. It had taken place the day before, in the Court of the Exchequer, and had involved Henry's tangled financial affairs. Four months before, on 15 March 1816, his banking business had fallen into bankruptcy (Caplan 1998, Corley 1998), and as part of his failure Henry had defaulted on the tax monies he had collected as Receiver-General of Oxfordshire. Naturally, the Crown was anxious to recover its lost revenues, and after stripping Henry of all his personal assets, the government looked for further recovery from anyone in debt to Henry. Lord Moira was an obvious target. On the eve of his departure to India to serve as Governor-General, in April 1813, he had drawn six

bills of £1,000 each on Henry's bank. Responsibility for them had been accepted by John Ridge, Moira's agent. The bills were still unpaid.

After all attempts to recover from debtors had been exhausted, Henry's sureties were responsible to the Crown for making up the remainder of any losses. The prime guarantors for those losses were Jane's brother Edward Austen Knight, and her maternal uncle, James Leigh Perrot. In the first year after Henry's bankruptcy these two paid out a staggering £21,000 (Corley, p.18). It so happens that the Revd James Austen was then acting as trustee for Leigh Perrot, and hence had a close interest in the trial. This explains Jane's note – the two must have already been discussing the forthcoming trial, and James was anxiously waiting for news.

From *The Times*, 16 July 1816:

COURT OF EXCHEQUER.

THE KING v. RIDGE.

This was a proceeding by extent against John Ridge, Esq.² calling upon him to pay the account, with the interest thereon, of three bills for 1,000L each, drawn by the Earl of Moira and accepted by him, and made payable at Messrs. Biddulph³ and Co.'s. Mr. Dauncey⁴ stated the case to the jury. This, he said, was a case, the statement and proof of which would occupy a very short portion of their time. The simple facts were these – Mr. Austen, a partner of the banking-house of Austen and Maunde, in Henrietta-street, Covent-garden, who had been a receiver-general of land and income tax for the county of Oxford, had become insolvent, and was considerably indebted to the Crown. The Crown, wishing rather to come upon any property of Mr. Austen than upon that of his sureties, issued an extent, under which, an inquisition having been taken, it was ascertained that he had the 3 bills in question in his possession, and the present proceeding was instituted to compel the defendant to pay their amount, as they were accepted by him. He understood that the grounds on which the payment of those bills was intended to be resisted was, that they had come into Mr. Austen's possession by usury. Why this defence had been set up, or how Lord Moira could have been concerned in an usurious transaction, it was not for him (Mr. Dauncey) to say; but certain it was, that such was the defence on which the payment of those bills was to be resisted. It would appear to the satisfaction of the jury, that the bills were drawn and signed by Lord Moira, and accepted by Mr. Ridge; and indeed he thought the jury would require some very strong and positive evidence, before they could believe that a man of Mr. Austen's experience would be so dishonest, and even so rash, as to take more than the legal interest, where he must necessarily be exposed to detection, and to the loss of his money.

John Green, a clerk to Mr. Ridge, proved that the signatures to the three bills were those of Lord Moira and Mr. Ridge. The bills were then put in and read: they were dated Portsmouth, 12th of April, 1813, and made payable twelve months after date. Here the case for the Crown closed.

Mr. Clarke, on the part of the defendant, addressed the Jury, and observed, that his learned friend (Mr. Dauncey) had anticipated the truth, when he alluded to the defence intended to be set up on the present case. That defence was, that these bills had been obtained by usury. He would show, from incontrovertible evidence, that treble the legal rate of discount had been taken in the first negotiation of them, and if the jury were satisfied of that fact, the learned judge would tell them, that whether this illegal discount had been taken by Mr. Austen or by Mr. Maunde, the effect was the same, and the amount of them could not be recovered in law. He should also observe that the present process was not really instituted to benefit the Crown, but in point of fact to serve Mr. Austen. Nothing had been more remote from the intention of Lord Moira, than to resist the payment of his debts; and in truth his lordship had made such arrangements for the disposal of his estates as to secure that object: nor would any resistance have been made to the present claim but for the hasty manner in which the demand for payment had been pressed. He then called Major James,⁵ who proved that he was the confidential agent of Lord Moira, and had been in the habit of raising money for his lordship for several years. In the month of April, 1813, in consequence of some instructions from Lord Moira, who was then preparing to go out to his government in India, he went to the banking house of Austen and Maunde, to know whether they could cash some bills for his lordship. Mr. Maunde who was the only person he saw said he would try. In a day or two after he went to Austen and Maunde with four bills (out of six, of 1,000L. each) drawn by Lord Moira and accepted by Mr. Ridge. These four bills had been handed to him by Mr. Ridge. He again saw Mr. Maunde, and from him he received 3,400L. for the four, instead of 3,800L. which he would have received, if only the legal discount had been deducted. The three bills (the subject of the action) were then handed to him, and he proved them to be three of the four which he had given to Mr. Maunde.

On his cross examination by Mr. Dauncey, he said, that Mr. Ridge was the military agent of Lord Moira, and in that capacity he had been accustomed to accept his bills, and that he used also to accept them before he became his military agent. He (Major James) was in the habit of raising money for Lord Moira since the year 1801 or 1802. Of late years his Lordship's credit had sunk considerably in the money market, and bills with only his own signature were not easily negotiated. He admitted that even with the acceptance of Mr. Ridge, the bills in question were not worth near their nominal value at the time he negotiated them with Mr. Maunde. Here the defence closed. A Gentleman at the table then rose and said, "My Lord, I wish to address a few words to your Lordship." The Judge (Baron Richards)⁶. – Who are you, Sir? "My Lord, I am the Solicitor of the Earl of Moira ". Baron Richards. Then, Sir, if you are Earl Moira's solicitor, you should know your duty better. Sit down.

Mr. Dauncey addressed the Jury in reply to evidence, and contended that no case of usury had been made out in the defence: on the contrary, from what had appeared, it was evident that Major James had sold the bills to Mr. Maunde. That more than their value was given for them was certain, from the fact of their being unpaid at the present time though more than two years had elapsed since they became due. Major James had proved beyond a doubt that the credit of Earl Moira had for a considerable time previously to the issuing of those bills been very much depreciated in the money market; and if ever there was a time when his bills would be of less than their nominal value, it must have been when his lordship was about to leave this country for India. What were the facts? That a few days (five) before Lord Moira sailed from England he drew those bills, in order to raise money. Mr. Ridge, who accepted them, had not at that time his usual credit in the money market. Would it then be believed that any man of common experience would have taken those bills at their nominal value? Or could it be credited that any man at all acquainted with the nature of such transactions would have risked his credit and his money in taking more than the legal discount, when he might have done what was usual on such occasions – purchased the bills at what he thought they were worth? The jury should remark, that Major James was not asked whether he considered himself as selling the bills. His learned friend (Mr. Clarke) had stated, that this proceeding was instituted to benefit Mr. Austen, and not the Crown. He (Mr. Dauncey) denied that to be the case. The Crown might have recovered its debt by proceeding against Mr. Austen's sureties: but it thought that would not be the fairest mode of acting while Mr. Austen had any property of his own. The jury would assign what weight they thought fit to the declamation of his learned friend (Mr. Clarke) – that this claim would not have been resisted, if payment had not been hastily pressed. Surely it could not be thought a hasty pressing for payment if the amount of bills payable 12 months after date was called for two years after they became due?

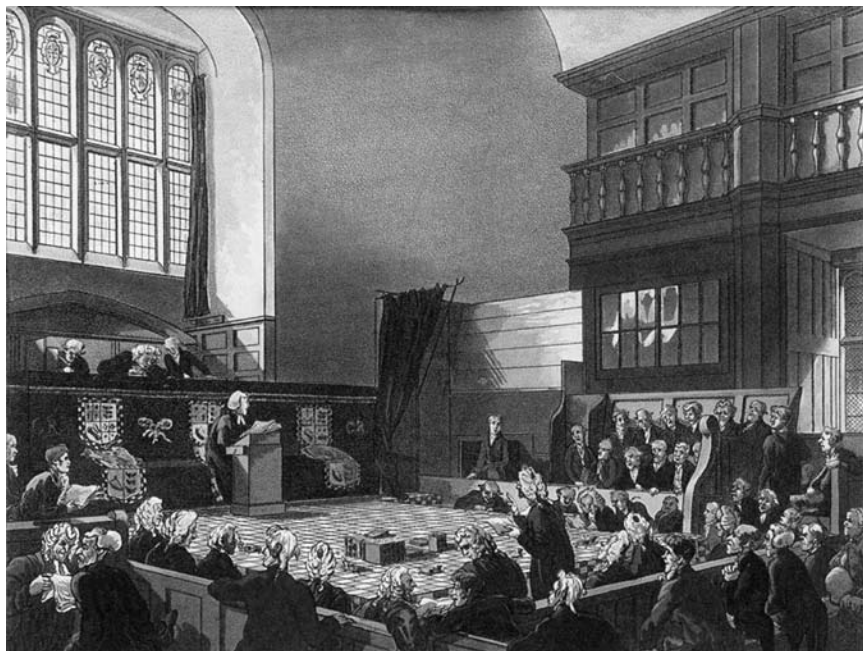
Baron Richards summed up the evidence, and told the Jury that the simple question which they had to decide was whether those bills had been obtained by usury, or whether the transaction between Major James, on behalf of Lord Moira was a *bona fide* sale of them. If they believed the former, they must find a verdict for the defendant; if the latter, they must find for the Crown.

The Jury retired, and after half an hour's deliberation returned a verdict for the Crown.

The crux of the trial had been whether or not the transaction was usurious in which Henry Maunde, acting for Austen & Co., charged a 15% rate for negotiating Moira's bills. The legal rate was 5%. In Maunde's defence was the established fact that no contract would come within the statute of usury, even though more than 5% was charged, if the principal sum lent was at risk or could possibly even be totally lost to the lender. This question of fact could be decided only by a judge

and jury. In *The King v Ridge*, and in obedience to the judge's instruction, the jury found that the credit ratings of both Lord Moira, and of his agent Ridge, were so poor that the rate that Maunde had charged was not usury.

Henry Austen wrote to Lord Moira in India two days later, informing him of the outcome of the trial. It was six months before a reply could arrive. In the eventual response, dated 17 January 1817, Moira conceded that he did not think that usury had been involved, writing that 'the enlarged interest was adapted to a Contingent delay in liquidation referring to my convenience' adding that of course 'I could not have influenced a proceeding of which it was impossible I should have knowledge' (Caplan, 2005, pp. 51-2).



Joseph Constantine Stadler, Court of Exchequer in the north west corner of Westminster Hall (aquatint, 1808), reproduced courtesy of the Palace of Westminster collection

The implication of the verdict was that John Ridge himself became liable to pay the debt. However, any celebration was premature, for Ridge appealed his case to the Barons of the Exchequer. The appeal⁷ was heard on Saturday 10 May 1817, and unfortunately for Henry the original verdict was reversed. Moira's letter from India, conceding that the enlarged interest was for his convenience, presumably arrived too late to be of any benefit. The Justices' opinion on appeal was that the case was not one of the sale by Major James to Maunde of a Bill issued by a person of dubious credit, but an advance on the credit of the Drawer,

Lord Moira. The Bills were therefore discounted for Lord Moira, and should have been discounted at 5%; they could not be said to have been bought from Major James – in which event 15% would have been permissible. Chief Baron Richards stated: ‘This is certainly a case of very singular circumstances ... I confess, on re-consideration, that I think this was an usurious transaction’. Ridge was therefore found not liable for payment, and hence the debt reverted to Lord Moira alone. We know that it was never paid. Twenty-three years later, on 5 September 1839, Henry commented on the original trial and the unfortunate outcome of the appeal in a note written to Moira’s son and heir, the second Marquis of Hastings. In the note he made a much belated appeal for redress – a futile appeal, for a son could not be held responsible for a father’s debts.

The verdict was obtained on the trial before the Barons of the Exchequer against the Acceptor of the Bills, i.e. M^r Ridge agent to the Earl of Moira, though the Earl’s Solicitor (M^r Evans) set up the plea of Usury. But on reference to the 12 Judges an opinion was given that the letter of the law did make the transaction usurious as concerned M^r Ridge. Therefore No money was ever obtained from Him, and the Drawer of the bills (who in fact received the money) i.e. The Earl of Moira, alone remained answerable as He confirms in the above letter.

P.S. Of course it is admitted that the plea of Usury was set up by Lord Moira’s Solicitor without even his Lordship’s knowledge. When the plea was urged, a murmur of indignation ran thro the Court.⁸

How was it that Jane’s brother Frank (baptized Francis William, but known as Frank), had to visit London on that ‘business of Uncle Henry’s’? How had a career captain in the navy become embroiled in this financial tangle? The answer is that when Moira’s bills were negotiated Henry’s firm had been a four way partnership: Henry Thomas Austen, Henry Maunde, James Tilson, *and* Francis William Austen. Frank had become a partner in 1806, on returning home newly affluent with prize money from the Battle of Santo Domingo 1813 was the last year of his seven year partnership agreement (leaving Austen & Co. to end its life in 1816 with the three partners: Austen, Maunde & Tilson). In a detailed inquiry made into Henry’s finances after his bankruptcy,⁹ an inventory reveals that one of the fateful £1,000 notes issued by Lord Moira, dated 17 April 1813, had been endorsed by then bank partners James Tilson and Francis William Austen. Hence Frank’s involvement in Moira’s debt, the trial, Henry’s bankruptcy, and Jane Austen’s letter.

Does not Henry Austen, in his role as banker, seem to have gone missing during this fateful month of April 1813? This was the month in which Lord Moira was lining his pockets with the financial essence of Austen & Co; when Henry Maunde was charging a usurious rate of interest on Lord Moira’s notes; and when James Tilson, the newest partner, and Frank Austen, a sea captain, had to be called upon to endorse a questionable bill of exchange. It appears that Henry, to the neglect of his banking business, must have been at his home at 64 Sloane Street, distracted by the declining health of his wife, Eliza de Feuillide. She was

terminally ill, and her condition had worsened at this time to such an extent that Jane came to Town on 22 April to assist in her care. The effort was of no avail, and Eliza died on 25 April.

The trial of 15 July 1816 closely involved the affairs of no fewer than four of the Austen brothers: James, Edward, Henry and Frank. It is not surprising that Jane Austen makes a particular reference to it in her correspondence. The whole episode may have been a distraction from her literary efforts. She had been having difficulty in working out the ending of her current book *Persuasion*, and finished a first draft of the last chapter on 16 July, the day after the trial. This was the ending which she later had to discard as unsatisfactory. Two days later she managed to produce what was to become the actual final paragraph – the passage in which Anne Elliot ‘gloried in being a sailor’s wife’. Thankfully, her inspiration then returned over the next two weeks and by 8 August she was able to write her much improved, two-chapter ending, which has become the established text.

This story has revealed something of the conundrum which was Henry Austen’s bankruptcy. Henry Maunde committed usury,¹⁰ Edward lost many thousands, James agonized over his Leigh Perrot trusteeship, Frank co-signed a bad financial note, and Henry lost both his wife and his business. Jane gave support as best she could, and through all the financial stresses the Austen family remained close and held together without recrimination. Henry in particular always appeared surprisingly untroubled. As Jane said of him after the death of his wife: ‘If I may so express myself, his Mind is not a Mind for affliction’.¹¹

Notes

- 1 *Jane Austen’s Letters*, ed. Deirdre Le Faye, p. 317; ‘uncle’ refers to Jane’s brother Henry, who was to take two nephews, Henry and William Knight, who lived at Godmersham, on a trip to the Continent.
- 2 John Ridge. Army Agent, of 44 Charing Cross.
- 3 Biddulph. Biddulph, Cox & George Ridge, Bankers of 43 Charing Cross.
- 4 Philip Dauncey Esq. (1759-1819), an attorney expert in Revenue cases.
- 5 Charles James. Major in the Royal Artillery Drivers (a sinecure), protégé of Lord Moira, and one-time business associate of Henry Austen in army agency (see Caplan, 1998).
- 6 Richard Richards Esq. (1752-1823), a Baron of the Exchequer.
- 7 *The King v. Ridge, The English Reports*, CXLVI, pp 390-3, Exchequer Division II, Stephens & Sons, London, 1914. For uncovering and generously sharing this reference I am indebted to Tony Corley.
- 8 Huntington Library, San Marino, California, ref. # HA 5186, and Caplan, 2005.
- 9 Inquisition taken by the Sheriff, County of Middlesex, 25 March 1816, in PRO, E.144/77.
- 10 Henry Maunde was to die in September of 1816, possibly a suicide (Corley 1998, p.19).
- 11 *Letters*, p. 215.

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- Williams, T., Esq., *Every Man His Own Lawyer, or Complete Law Library* (1819), pp. 465-69.

'My name is Norval'

Maggie Lane

In Chapter 13 of *Mansfield Park* Tom Bertram tries to convince his brother Edmund that their father would have no objections to amateur theatricals:

Nobody is fonder of the exercise of talent in young people, or promotes it more, than my father; and for any thing of the acting, spouting, reciting kind, I think he has always a decided taste. I am sure he encouraged it in us as boys. How many a time have we mourned over the dead body of Julius Caesar, and *to be'd* and not *to be'd*, in this very room, for his amusement! And I am sure, *my name was Norval*, every evening of my life through one Christmas holidays.¹

Shakespeare we all recognise ('part of every Englishman's constitution' still); the reference to the character Norval, which now requires elucidation, would have been almost equally familiar to readers in 1814, who might have smiled at Tom's conflation of some of the greatest speeches in the language with lines most commonly associated with schoolboy mangling.

That the passage was evidently part of the schoolboy repertoire for decades is evidenced by George Eliot, writing some forty-six years later. In *The Mill on the Floss*, another schoolboy, Tom Tulliver, is made to declaim the same piece as part of his education to be a gentleman. The 'mean accomplishments' taught by Tom's first schoolmaster, which Tom himself scorns as being effete and irrelevant to his future life as a man of business, are 'to write like copperplate ... to spell without forethought, and to spout "My name is Norval" without bungling'.²

So what would the two Toms, and thousands like them, have had to 'spout'?

My name is Norval; on the Grampian hills
My father feeds his flocks; a frugal swain,
Whose constant cares were to increase his store,
And keep his only son, myself, at home.

For I had heard of battles, and I long'd
To follow to the field some warlike Lord.

The passage comes from *Douglas*, a play in blank verse by John Home (1722-1808). Young Norval, who has saved the life of Lord Randolph in battle, turns out to be the long-lost son of the tragic heroine, Lady Randolph (readers of *Mansfield Park* will spot the link with *Lovers' Vows*, another play which hinges on an estranged mother and son). Old Norval, the peasant, has found the basket containing the day-old boy, together with gold and jewels, in the river, and brought him up as his own, in echoes of *The Winter's Tale* and Moses in his basket.

Douglas, which is among the plays considered for performance by the family at Mansfield Park, was Home's most popular play, the boy character's strongly developed sense of honour and yearning for manly glory making him a role model for the nation's male youth, as we have seen, for more than a century. A minister in the Church of Scotland, Home had a colourful touch of military glory in his background. As a graduate of the University of Edinburgh, he had enlisted in the college company of volunteers to defend the city against the Jacobite army. In January 1746 he was taken prisoner at Falkirk and held in Doune Castle, and escaped by means of blanket-ropes. Thereafter he combined less dangerous clerical and literary pursuits. Not that he was always uncontroversial: *Douglas* caused offence to Presbyterians, who were opposed to any drama, but especially drama by a clergyman. Home was forced to resign his living, and moved to London as secretary to Lord Bute.

The play was an enormous success from the beginning. Henry Mackenzie recorded 'the tears of the audience' at the play's first performance in Edinburgh in 1756, and Robert Burns wrote of 'the horrors I felt for Lady Randolph's distresses'.³ The dramatic tension which so moved audiences of the time came from the clash between maternal tenderness and the male code of chivalry. With its identification of Scotland with ancient Greece as seat of learning and heroic feelings, its appeal to Scottish audiences was obvious, but the literati of London also welcomed it to their stage as part of their growing fascination with Scottish history and culture. It helped validate the change in the English view of Scotland from barbarous outpost to equal partner in civilisation.

Peg Woffington and Sarah Siddons were among the eminent English actresses to take the part of Lady Randolph over the next few decades. Sarah Siddons was in the role on 3 June 1780 at the Theatre Royal, Bath, a performance which was attended by the novelist and journal-writer Fanny Burney. Play-going then was not a hushed affair. Fanny mentions a couple of young women in the audience who sobbed ostentatiously for half an hour, and an admirer of her own who talked to her through the performance, 'except when my favourite Mr Lee who "did" old Norval in *Douglas*, was on the stage, & then, either from equal admiration, or an attention to *mine*, he was strictly silent.'⁴ Fanny was evidently already familiar with the play from the London stage. She does not mention Sarah Siddons on this occasion, but had been cool about her when she saw her in another play a few days earlier, which is when she had conceived her admiration for 'Mr Lee' (John

Lee, 1725-81). ‘At the desire of Miss F. Bowdler, we went to the Play, to see an Actress she is doatingly fond of, Mrs Siddons, in Belvidera – but instead of falling in love with *her*, we fell in Love with Mr Lee, who played Pierre – & so well! ... I shall have no entertainment while here equal to seeing him, which I should wish to do every time he performs.’⁵



*J. Heath after John Opie, William Henry West Betty
in the role of Young Norval (steel engraving, 1807)*

Others were more impressed with Siddons in the part of Lady Randolph. During the ‘My name is Norval’ speech, wrote one admirer, G.J. Bell, ‘the idea of her own child seems to have been growing, and at this point overwhelms her and fills her eyes with tears. Beautiful acting of this sweet feeling throughout these speeches.’⁶ When she played the part in Scotland in 1784, it was to ‘the severe detriment of attendance at the general assembly of the Church of Scotland’, amusingly enough in view of the play’s history!⁷

Perhaps the most famous actor to become identified with the part of Young Norval himself was William Henry West Betty, born in 1791. His father was a Shropshire farmer who later became manager of a linen factory in County Down. William's first visit to a play was at the age of ten, when he saw Sarah Siddons on the stage of the Belfast theatre, whereupon he declared he would die if he were not permitted to become a player. His father obligingly apprenticed him to a Belfast prompter, and the boy's first stage appearance was in that city on 11 August 1803. He was an immediate sensation, his first season including the roles of Romeo and Young Norval. The following year he came to London, appearing at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, where his roles included Frederic in Elizabeth Inchbald's *Lovers' Vows* – the part taken by Henry Crawford in *Mansfield Park*. William Hazlitt among others was entranced by Betty's performance as Young Norval, describing him as 'moving about gracefully, with all the flexibility of youth'.⁸ Sometimes called 'the English Roscius' or 'the young Roscius' in an allusion to the Roman actor, the thirteen-year-old Betty was painted in the part of Norval by John Opie, one of the leading portrait painters of the day. 'The Cornish Wonder', as he was known, having come from a humble home in St Agnes, Opie is famed for his portraits of the leading cultural figures of the last decade of the eighteenth century and the first decade of the nineteenth. His wife was the novelist Amelia Opie and among the sitters who were also his friends were Mary Wollstonecraft and Hannah More. Betty's startling rise from provincial background to early fame in London echoed Opie's own, and perhaps helped infuse the portrait with exceptional sympathy. Opie's 1804 painting preserves for us the boyish energy and grace with which young Betty captivated audiences in the part, which seems to have been made for him as he for it. Sadly, as an adult actor Betty lost most of his charm: early praise had made him arrogant so that he would not take direction, his vocal limitations led him to rant, and his figure soon became corpulent. He was forced to retire from the stage and is thought to have attempted suicide in 1825, though he lived until 1874, and had a son who also became an actor.

In 1807, while Jane Austen was living in Southampton, the local grammar school put on a production of *Douglas* for the benefit of British prisoners of war in France, playing 'to an uncommonly crowded house' in the theatre in French Street.⁹ Though it is doubtful Jane Austen saw this particular production (despite recording expenses of 17s.9d. on 'plays and water parties' that year),¹⁰ she must surely have seen it earlier in either Bath or London, so popular a part of the repertoire was it throughout her life. Its familiarity inspired Sheridan's parody of the parent-child recognition plot in *The Critic* (1779):

My name's Tom Jenkins – *alias* have I none –
Tho' orphaned and without a friend!

Like Sheridan, Jane Austen had burlesqued the sentimental discovery scene in her youthful *Love and Freindship*, in which long-lost grandchildren are found by the dozen and characters faint with joy in turn. Now, in the serious context of theatricals in her mature novel, she has another moment of fun at the play's expense. We might notice that Tom Bertram casts the famous quotation into the

past tense – deliberately, to heighten the supposed sense of identity with the boy character and the onerous task so unrelentingly required by their father. To be perfectly accurate, Tom should have said ‘I am sure we recited *my name is Norval* every evening ...’ but this would not be half so funny, or so telling.

In another instance of home theatricals, Jane Austen’s Godmersham nephews and niece acted a few scenes from *Douglas* just before Christmas 1805, to such acclaim that the performance was repeated in January before a larger family audience. Jane Austen was not at Godmersham on either occasion, but she had been there the previous summer and had joined in acting little plays with the children, which perhaps, as Margaret Wilson has suggested, encouraged them to move on to something more ambitious at Christmas.¹¹ Did she even suggest the play? Lady Randolph was played by Fanny, aged 12; Lord Randolph rather incongruously by George, aged 10; while 11-year-old Edward took the plum part of Norval.

Notes

- 1 Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*, C. U. P. 2005, p. 149.
- 2 George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*, Penguin Classics 2003, p. 140.
- 3 H, Mackenzie, *An Account of the Life and Writings of John Home Esq*, 1822, p. 38; *Letters of Robert Burns*, ed. J. de Lancey Ferguson, 1885, vol.2, p. 64.
- 4 *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, ed. Betty Rizzo, OUP 2003, vol. 4, p.158.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 84.
- 6 Michael Booth, ‘Sarah Siddons’ in Booth, John Stokes and Susan Bassnett, *Three Tragic Actresses*, CUP 1996, p. 32.
- 7 Kenneth Simpson, ‘Home, John (1722-1808)’ in *Dictionary of National Biography*, OUP online, 2004.
- 8 W. Hazlitt, *Works*, ed. P.P. Howe, vol. 8, p. 294.
- 9 Paula Byrne, *Jane Austen and the Theatre*, Hambledon 2002, p. 43.
- 10 Deirdre Le Faye, ‘Journeys, Waterparties and Plays’ in the *Jane Austen Society Collected Reports*, vol. 4 pp. 29-35
- 11 Margaret Wilson, ‘Jane Austen and *Douglas*’, *Collected Reports* vol. 5, pp. 221-22.

The Cult of Jane Austen: 'Her fame is far from universal'

Deirdre Le Faye

My old Chambers *Twentieth Century Dictionary* (no date, but obviously early in the last century), defines 'cult' as simply 'a system of religious belief, or worship'. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 1990, enlarges upon this with three definitions: 1. a system of religious worship especially as expressed in ritual; 2. devotion or homage to a person or thing (*the cult of aestheticism*); 3. denoting a person or thing popularised in this way (*cult film, cult figure*). I don't think we have quite placed Jane Austen's statue upon an altar as an object of religious worship (though admittedly a friend of mine refers to her as 'the sainted Jane' when she writes to enquire whether I am still busy researching her life and times); but the other definitions of 'cult' do most certainly apply: devotion or homage to a person or thing; and, denoting a person or thing popularised in this way. Depending upon the speaker's point of view, the creation of Jane Austen as a 'cult figure' may be either a foolish vulgarisation or a long overdue acknowledgement of her genius as a novelist, but it cannot be denied that such a cult exists. So how and when did this cult come into existence? Where did the rivulets first spring up, and gradually trickle together, to become what is now an apparently unending flood of biographies and works of literary criticism, TV and cinema films of the novels as well as prequels, sequels and spin-offs to their plots, with guided tours to the places where she lived, visited, and is buried, and enormous sums being paid in the sale rooms for original manuscripts and memorabilia? It may seem that this 'cultification' is a modern phenomenon, but in fact it starts very early on in Austen biographical times – though then, of course, unrecognised – and in retrospect seems indeed almost inevitable.

When her novels first appeared, they were unusual by their very trueness to life, unlike the wild Radcliffian romances that were still so popular. This was noticed straightaway by her readers: Miss Milbanke enjoyed *Pride and Prejudice* and thought it was 'the *most probable* fiction' she had ever read;¹ but Lady Davy disliked it for the same reason: 'Want of interest is the fault I can least excuse in works of mere amusement, and however natural the picture of vulgar minds and manners is there given, it is unrelieved by the agreeable contrast of more dignified and refined characters occasionally captivating attention.'² The Dowager Lady Vernon considered that *Mansfield Park* was 'not much of a novel, more the history of a family party in the country, very natural, and the characters well drawn';³ and Lady Anne Romilly said it was 'real natural every day life.'⁴ Lady Gordon added that 'especially in *Mansfield Park*, you actually *live* with [the characters], you fancy yourself one of the family.'⁵ Later on, when *Emma* had been published, the Scottish authoress Susan Ferrier wrote that it had 'no story whatever, and the heroine is not better than other people; but the characters are all so true to life, and the style so piquant, that it does not require the adventitious aids of mystery and adventure.'⁶

The professional reviewers agreed that although the plots might be thought trifling, the characters were ‘naturally drawn’, and that *Emma*, for example, ‘will probably become a favourite with all those who seek for harmless amusement, rather than deep pathos or appalling horrors, in works of fiction’. When discussing *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* in 1818, the reviewer appreciated her style, and prophesied that at some unspecified future date, ‘the delightful writer of the works now before us, will be one of the most popular of English novelists’;⁷ but no other contemporary critic thought likewise, and during the 1820s-30s many of Jane Austen’s contemporaries – when they bothered to refer to her novels at all – still took the view that they were too natural to be interesting. One elderly lady was remembered as saying to her daughters: ‘My dears, I can’t think why you read that woman’s books, it is just like our own home.’⁸

So this is the first rivulet: the novels were seen as being not run of the mill, but out of the ordinary, unusual – which might perhaps imply that those readers who enjoyed them were themselves rather unusual people.

The second rivulet is that of morality. Brother Henry’s biographical articles of 1818 and 1833 had stressed Jane’s virtuous and pious life and the fact that she was buried in Winchester Cathedral; and in the 1820s-30s reviewers picked up this aspect, praising her character and her soul, as tacitly betrayed in her writings – their ‘recollections of what is beautiful and good in the works of this admirable woman ...’ She has the ‘purest morality and most undeviating good sense’ ... and her ‘works may safely be recommended, not only as among the most unexceptionable of their class, but as combining, in an eminent degree, instruction and amusement.’ Lord Morpeth contributed a poem to the literary album *The Keepsake for 1835* in which he mentioned various female novelists, but praised Jane above the others: ‘all perfect Austen’ whose ‘clear style flows on without pretence, / With unstained purity, and unmatched sense ...’ Readers now could pride themselves on being consciously virtuous by dint of reading the novels, and acquiring further virtue as they did so.

In the decades of the 1840s-50s, Jane’s nephew, the Revd James Edward Austen-Leigh, not yet thinking of writing his *Memoir of Jane Austen*, was nevertheless in the custom of reading her novels aloud to his large family, as his daughter Mary Augusta remembered in later years:

Still better, if possible, [than his reading of Walter Scott] was his reading of the Austen novels, and here he probably had some remembrance and inherited knowledge of the way in which their author had herself read them aloud, to guide him. The result was that to his children their characters appeared to be perfectly real people, amongst whom we grew up, knowing them in part from our earliest years, and learning as we became older to understand and appreciate them better and better ... Jane Austen’s books appeared to us then, and for a long time afterwards, to be a family and almost a private possession. Our father looked upon it as an accepted fact that to enjoy them required a mind of a peculiar order, and that it was not to be expected she could ever become a great favourite with the general public. He would instance one or

two cultivated friends of his own, who frankly admitted that her works gave them no pleasure, and he thought it only natural that there should be this variety of taste. When, in course of time, we heard of certain other families who knew and cared for them as we did, it came as a surprise, and made us feel that, if we could but meet, we must be friends on the strength of it.⁹

This is the third stream, the idea that readers of the Austen novels must wish to meet others who shared their enjoyment and thereby form a select society.

The fourth stream or rivulet, also arising about mid-century, was the idea of making holiday tours specifically to see the places mentioned in the novels or concerning Jane Austen's life – and these tourists were not slow to see themselves, in quasi-religious terms, as pilgrims going on pilgrimages. Lady Richardson remembered:

We took a day at Winchester and visited the shrine of Jane Austen, with even more interest than that of William of Wickham. We talked over the happy days of reading aloud the delightful novels of Jane Austen, when the author was as little known as that of Waverley, and when some of our party gave our mother the name of Miss Bates, from the favourable view she took of all the human race and the events of the world.¹⁰

Fifthly, memorabilia, in the form of autographs, were now being sought, both in this country and in America, and in 1852 Miss Eliza Susan Quincy of Boston, Massachusetts wrote to Admiral Francis Austen:

Since high critical authority has pronounced the delineations of character, in the works of Jane Austen, second only to those of Shakespeare, transatlantic admiration appears superfluous – Yet it may not be uninteresting to her family to receive an assurance that the influence of her genius is extensively recognised in the American Republic – even by the highest judicial authorities. The late Mr Chief Justice Marshall, of the Supreme Court of the United States, and his associate Mr Justice Story, highly estimated and admired Miss Austen, and to them we owe our introduction to her society.

Miss Quincy continued with a request for 'the autograph of his sister, or a few lines in her handwriting, [which] would be placed among our chief treasures.' In response to this Admiral Francis sent the Quincy family a complete letter, that of Jane to Martha Lloyd dated 12 -13 November 1800.¹¹

In 1856 Miss Quincy's married sister Anna (Mrs Robert) Waterston came to England with the intention of performing 'a pilgrimage to the places in England – once the abode of Jane Austen!' – and on 9 June wrote to Admiral Francis:

Today we leave London, and go to Winchester, a pilgrimage to *her* resting place which has given more interest to me in the old Cathedral, than all its buried Kings. From Winchester we go to Salisbury ... thence to the Isle of Wight. I will write to you again ... and name the time of our visiting Portsmouth.

In February 1863 Mrs Waterston published an article, 'Jane Austen', in the *Atlantic Monthly*, recalling this 1856 trip when she and her family went to the grave in Winchester Cathedral, to Box Hill, to Bath, and to the Isle of Wight, finally crossing the water to Portsmouth:

After taking a turn on the ramparts in memory of Fanny Price, and looking upon the harbour whence the Thrush went out, we drove over Portsdown Hill to visit the surviving member of that household which called Jane Austen their own. ... In the finely-cut features of the brother, who retained at eighty years of age much of the early beauty of his youth, we fancied we must see a resemblance to his sister, of whom there exists no portrait.¹²

After the professional reviewers of the early part of the 19th century, the sixth rivulet, which developed later in the century, was created by journalists, other authors, and gentlemen of letters, of whom G.H. Lewes was perhaps the most vocal in his appreciation of Jane Austen. Unfortunately, he inaugurated a lofty attitude of intellectual snobbery which persisted for many decades; in one of his articles, published in 1852, he states flatly: 'only cultivated minds fairly appreciate the exquisite art of Miss Austen.' He realises that some readers will find her works 'tame and uninteresting', but a 'cultivated reader' will appreciate her as 'the most truthful, charming, humorous, pure-minded, quick-witted and unexaggerated of writers'.

A few years later, Lewes repeated and enlarged upon this theme. He admitted that Jane Austen's name was 'still unfamiliar in men's mouths' and that

there are many well informed persons who will be surprised to hear it mentioned among the best writers ... [however], mention the name of Miss Austen to a cultivated reader ... and [his eyes] will at once flash forth sympathetic admiration ... but beyond the literary circle we find the name almost entirely unknown. ... That her novels are very extensively read, is not an opinion, but a demonstrated fact and with this fact we couple the paradoxical fact, of a fine artist, whose works are widely known and enjoyed, being all but unknown to the English public and quite unknown abroad. But the fact that her name is not even now a household word proves that her excellence must be of an unobtrusive kind, shunning the glare of popularity, not appealing to temporary tastes and vulgar sympathies, but demanding culture in its admirers. The absence of breadth, picturesqueness, and passion, will also limit the appreciating audience of Miss Austen to the small circle of cultivated minds; and even these minds are not always capable of greatly relishing her works. We have known very remarkable people who cared little for her pictures of everyday life...

and he then goes on to castigate Charlotte Brontë as being 'utterly without a sense of humour, and by nature fervid and impetuous', hence it was hardly surprising that she did not like *Pride and Prejudice*.

Lewes was instinctively thinking of male readers, but in 1866 an anonymous journalist writing in the *Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* linked a rivulet of social snobbery to that of the intellectual, when she assured her female readers that Jane Austen was 'a singularly gifted woman, of refined and elegant mind, with principles high and pure.' She wrote

like a cultivated lady ... if you think a book must be dull without thrilling incidents and wonderful characters, Miss Austen did not write for you. ... [but]

if you can appreciate subtle strokes of character, delicate shafts of satire, can smile at dry wit and laugh at well sustained humour, if you can take pleasure in fineness of workmanship and have patience to examine it, then Miss Austen did write for you. ... Miss Austen, though she may not be much read by the general public, is, perhaps, more completely appreciated than ever by minds of the highest culture.

‘Cult’, ‘cultured’ and ‘cultivated’ all come from the same root – to cultivate, literally, is to produce agricultural crops, but metaphorically it is ‘to civilise or refine’, ‘to apply oneself to improving or developing the mind, manners, etc.’; and ‘cultured’ means ‘having refined taste and manners and a good education’. The argument would be, therefore, that you can only appreciate Jane Austen’s works if you are cultured, and to be seen enjoying her novels demonstrates that you are indeed cultured.

In the 1860s, when the Revd James Edward Austen-Leigh started thinking about writing a biography of his aunt, he was aware that some of her readers were sufficiently interested in her life to visit Winchester Cathedral and enquire for her grave there, much to the bewilderment of the verger: ‘Pray, sir, can you tell me whether there was anything particular about that lady; so many people want to know where she was buried?’ But he also knew that even in the recent past, her novels were largely unappreciated. When he published his *Memoir of Jane Austen* in 1870, he remembered that:

Sometimes a friend or neighbour, who chanced to know of our connection with the author, would condescend to speak with moderate approbation of *Sense and Sensibility* or *Pride and Prejudice*, but if they had known that we, in our secret thoughts, classed her with Madame D’Arblay or Miss Edgeworth, or even with some other novel writers of the day whose names are now scarcely remembered, they would have considered it an amusing instance of family conceit. To the multitude her works appeared tame and commonplace, poor in colouring, and sadly deficient in incident and interest. It is true that we were sometimes cheered by hearing that a different verdict had been pronounced by more competent judges: we were told how some great statesman or distinguished poet held these works in high estimation; we had the satisfaction of believing that they were most admired by the best judges ... [indeed] one of the ablest men of my acquaintance said, in that kind of jest which has much earnest in it, that he had established it in his own mind, as a new test of ability, whether people *could* or *could not* appreciate Miss Austen’s merits.¹³

The *Memoir* received a number of reviews, and in writing hers the authoress Mrs Olyphant declared that the novels were

so calm and cold and keen ... It is surprising that they should at length have climbed into the high place they now hold. ... A certain amount of culture and force of observation must be presupposed in any real independent admiration of these books. They are not the kind of books which catch the popular fancy at once without pleasing the critic ... [but] are rather of the class which attracts the connoisseur ... [and are] carried by the superior rank of readers into a

half-real half-fictitious universality of applause. ... [Miss Austen's] works have become classic, and it is now the duty of every student of recent English literature to be more or less acquainted with them.

The Shakespearian scholar Richard Simpson also reviewed the *Memoir*, and his article has been described as 'one of the high points in the understanding of Jane Austen. ... He saw her as a novelist of essentially critical genius, who employed the language and form of the novel as the instruments of her judgement upon society.' Unfortunately he also brought in both snobbery and sentimentality:

She is neat, epigrammatic, and incisive, but always a lady ... she shows what patience, perseverance, modest study, and a willingness to keep her compositions for the test of time, could do for a genius not very commanding in its own nature. In the gallery of authors hers is one of the most graceful and kindly figures. Hers is a magnetic attractiveness which charms while it compels ... Might we not ... borrow from Miss Austen's biographer the title which the affection of a nephew bestows upon her, and recognise her officially as 'dear Aunt Jane'?

This strain of sentimentality is the next rivulet, the seventh to add to the increasing flow.

Another reviewer, writing anonymously in the *St Paul's Magazine*, said the novels were 'true in conception and faultless in execution', and made a humorous comparison with modern fiction:

There is a total absence of the delirious excitement which distinguishes the novel writing of the present day. The wild pulsation, the stormy embracing, the hand-pressure which bruises, the kiss which consumes, all these things, the essentials of the fiction of our period, are absent from Jane Austen's pages...

He imagines how an 1870s novelist would deal with Maria Rushworth's elopement with Henry Crawford:

Her veins would throb with fire, her brain would swell to bursting, her wealth of hair would uncoil its golden mass and heavily sweep her dainty feet, her seared brow would plunge and hiss in ice cold fountains a thousand times before the fatal step was taken ... Instead of all which we have these events quietly dismissed by Jane Austen with merely decent phrases of regret.

The reviewer continues:

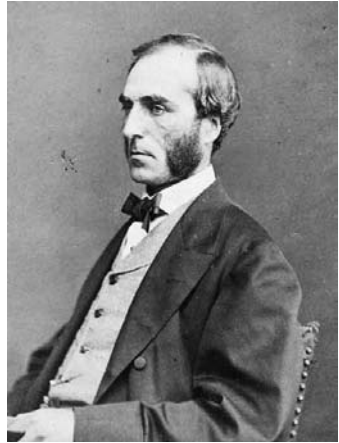
[Those readers who] take delight in a pleasant vein of irony permeating the ordinary scenes of ordinary life, and marking all its follies, vulgarities, vanities, and baseness, with unflinching precision, will find every one of the Austen novels abundant in the special truth, and in the satire which they relish.

However, he ends by saying:

Jane Austen's works – though not devoured by young ladies of our period with the same greediness as the new stories just come from Mudie's ¹⁴ – are still taken down by 'the girls' from the maternal shelf, when there is nothing else to be had, and are read – by them – with tranquil interest. But they are pondered over with most attention and most appreciation by men of thought and literary education.

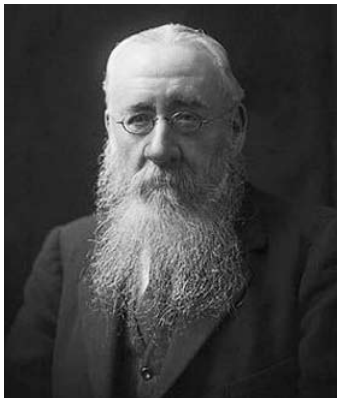
And this is now the eighth rivulet, encouraging male academics to think that they are the only people really able and entitled to understand and criticise the novels.

The first man of thought and literary education to take up this anonymous reviewer's implicit challenge seems to have been Goldwin Smith, Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford from 1858-66, and then Professor of History at Cornell before settling in Toronto in 1871. In 1890 he published a biography, *Life of Jane Austen*, which avoids all the whirlpools of morality, snobbery and conceit, and says simply that: 'Perfect in her finish and full of delicate strokes of art, her works require to be read with attention, not skimmed as one skims many a novel, that they may be fully enjoyed.' Not long afterwards, Professor Saintsbury of Edinburgh University, wrote a preface to the 1894 edition of *Pride and Prejudice*, in which he referred to 'the sect – fairly large and yet unusually choice – of Austenians or Janites' [sic] – who were prepared to argue amongst themselves as to which of the novels was the best. This seems to be the first instance of the usage of either of these words in print, together with the tacit acceptance that such readers formed a sect – even if not yet quite a cult.



Goldwyn Smith

By this time, in America, the novels were considered English classics and were subjects of examination at American universities, and the novelist William



Professor Saintsbury

Dean Howells referred to her as 'the divine Jane': 'She was great and they [the novels] were beautiful, because she and they were honest, and dealt with nature nearly a hundred years ago as realism deals with it today.' Another American, Oscar Fay Adams, came to England in 1889 as a pilgrim biographer, and subsequently published his *The Story of Jane Austen's Life* in 1891. In his *Memoir* JEAL had warned off enthusiasts from visiting Chawton Cottage – 'I cannot recommend any admirer of Jane Austen to undertake a pilgrimage to this spot. The building indeed still stands, but it has lost all that gave it its character'¹⁵ – and in the introduction to his *Letters of Jane Austen*

(1884), Lord Brabourne had confirmed that the Cottage was neither 'beautiful nor romantic, nothing to associate it with the memory of the immortal Jane. When Cassandra Austen died in 1845, it was turned into dwellings for labourers, and so

altered that it cannot now be seen as it was in Jane's days.'¹⁶ Mr Adams was not discouraged, however, and photographed the Cottage as it then was – probably the earliest photographs extant.

Apart from professional writers, in 1892 a certain Edith Edlmann published an article entitled 'A Girl's Opinion on Jane Austen', in *Temple Bar* magazine.¹⁷ Edlmann's name does not appear in the British Library catalogue, so her youthful interest in criticising Jane Austen's works evidently took her no further along the path of literature, and her opinions are in any case of no great value. But she is probably a good example of what was then the grass-roots feminine opinion, one of 'the girls' identified by the *St Paul's Magazine* reviewer as reading Jane Austen's novels with 'tranquil interest' when nothing else was available to them. Edith has very little knowledge of social history, but is smugly sure that the late 19th century must in every way be better than Jane Austen's time. She begins by repeating the intellectually snobbish comments of past decades:

The novel in [Miss Austen's] hands became a means of enjoyment to people of taste and intelligence ... her warmest admirers for nearly one hundred years are found, not so much among other young people, as among savants and men of letters ... the constant affection of the few and cultured still keeps her in her niche of the temple of fame.

Edith then goes on to praise the 'purity and simplicity of her style and matter ... and her character painting', but decries her limited plots – 'depth and power to any extent are always wanting in Miss Austen's work.' She dislikes most of the heroes and heroines:

for Darcy and Knightley we have nothing but praise ... but her younger heroes are the most priggish, insipid, terrible young men, who never have an idea beyond compliments and morning calls. Occasionally they drive a curricule or go out shooting ... so unlike the young men of today are they, that we are tempted to think they must be drawn from imagination rather than observation. It is hard to believe that such types represent Englishmen of not more than a century ago. Athletics, cricket, boating, golf, steeple-chasing are unknown pastimes to her country gentlemen.

The heroines, on the other hand, must be

undoubtedly drawn from observation, not imagination, let us hope that they are overdrawn. We often wish, especially in Miss Austen's earlier works, that her young ladies possessed more reserve and delicacy. Their universal confidences are not to be admired; such candour and openness is peculiar. ... We may congratulate ourselves that we live in the days when High Schools, Extension Lectures, Magazine Clubs, and Lawn-Tennis have superseded sentiment, sensibility, hysterics and mutual confidences.

Then the love scenes are so stilted and unnatural:

the inner heart of life lies untouched, unstirred. Miss Austen's characters have apparently no depths below the surface currents of their lives. None of those higher and better moments from which, as a rule, all our best work and purest enthusiasms spring. We must attribute the omission to a conscious feeling of

inability to deal with such subjects. Never, even when she tries to do so, can she touch her readers' hearts. Her love scenes, her sick beds, her neglected children never move us. What would not Dickens or Charlotte Bronte have made out of the forlorn solitary little figure of Fanny Price. ... It is to this fact that the want of appreciation shown by most younger readers must be attributed.

But Jane Austen's worst fault, in Edith's High Church opinion, is her painful truthfulness in depicting clerics and clerical life in the early 19th century:

The abuses of Church patronage were a hundred times greater than in the present day – there was no parish organisation, no mission work, and no district visiting, training was considered superfluous. The wives of such young men are young ladies of fashion and accomplishment ... no practical token of general goodwill, no mothers' meetings or superintending of soup kitchens form a part of their lives. Neither does port wine, flannel, nor beef tea find its way from the great house to the cottage ... the sacred office, the consecrated life, the time, money, health, strength, spent on Christ's poor, as well as the cassock and collar, the daily services and advanced ritual – these are the ideas of a later age.

Precisely at the beginning of the 20th century, the American W.D. Howells wrote again about Jane Austen and her works: 'The story of *Pride and Prejudice* has of late years become known to a constantly, almost rapidly, increasing cult, as it must be called, for the readers of Jane Austen are hardly ever less than her adorers: she is a passion and a creed, if not quite a religion.' This may be the first instance of the word cult appearing in print in relation to Jane and her novels – and the word religion is also hovering on the sidelines.

In 1902 the pilgrimage rivulet increased in its flow, when Constance Hill published *Jane Austen, her homes & her friends*, with illustrations by her sister Ellen – in effect a guide book for all those who wished to follow in Jane Austen's footsteps. 'On a fine morning, in the middle of September, a country chaise was threading its way through Hampshire lanes. In it were seated two ardent admirers of Jane Austen, armed with pen and pencil, who were eager to see the places where she dwelt, to look upon the scenes that she had looked upon, and to learn all that could be learnt of her surroundings' – and Miss Hill now named Hampshire as 'Austen-land'.¹⁸

Henry James – perhaps with a touch of jealousy? – during a lecture in 1905 picked up on Simpson's phrase of 'dear Aunt Jane' and sneered about the 'beguiled infatuation, a sentimentalised vision ... created by the body of publishers, editors, illustrators, producers of the pleasant twaddle of magazines, who have found their "dear", our dear, everybody's dear, Jane, so infinitely to their material purpose, so amenable to pretty reproduction in every variety of what is called tasteful, and in what seemingly proves to be saleable, form.'

William Henry Helm, an unremembered writer who published a few books on a variety of subjects between 1900-1920, brought out *Jane Austen and her Country-House Comedy* in 1909. In this he argues pro and con her claims to fame

and popularity – on the one hand, her books fail ‘to attract the mass of novel readers’ because they are so unexciting, and he repeats that ‘their strong appeal is to the calmer feelings and the intellect, not to the passions and the prejudices’. He admits that ‘Jane Austen is loved as few [authors] have been’ – but counters this by playing an anti-sentimental card: she was ‘unemotional and unsympathetic’ ... the ‘conjugal instinct was not strongly developed in Jane ... and it may be assumed with some confidence that the maternal instinct also found little place in her nature.’ He continues:

In any case her fame is far from universal. She has never been, and never will be, popular in the sense in which the men and women whose publishers cheerfully print first editions of a hundred thousand copies are popular. Her appeal, in her own lifetime, when her name was unknown, was not to ‘the general’, and it is only much less restricted now because of the enormous increase in the reading public. ... Her name may never be among those that are painted round the reading rooms of National Libraries, nor included by many school children in examination lists of eminent authors. Hers is too delicate a product to attract the man or woman ‘in the street’. There is a bouquet about it that is lost on the palate which enjoys the ‘strong’ fiction of the material phase through which humanity is now passing.

Helm does, however, make some comments that are more amusing today than they were in 1909. He notices the lack of physical description in the novels:

As to the costumes of the men and women ... we are usually left to dress them as we like, and there is little doubt that many a modern reader has mentally pictured Darcy wearing a tweed suit and a bowler hat, Charles Musgrove in a golfing cap and loose knickerbockers, and Mr Collins or Mr Elton in a stiff collar of the kind usually worn by the Anglican clergy of today. For the ladies, the whirligig of time has brought back the modes of a century ago ... the Misses Bertram might go shopping in Regent Street today without any one remarking that their dress, or their coiffure, was seriously out of date.

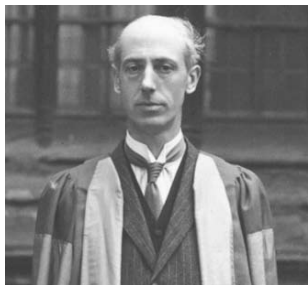
He disagrees with Constance Hill, and does not think there is any special ‘Jane Austen country’, apart from a few ‘scattered spots where her presence is still to be felt.’ Steventon rectory has gone, Chawton Cottage is now used as tenements for villagers, only Chawton House is unchanged. He suggests instead that a blue plaque might be placed on the house in Henrietta Street, once her brother Henry’s home, where so many of her letters were written (and so it was, a century later). In his final paragraph, however, he urges further study:

It has been the endeavour of this book to show Jane Austen as she lives in her writings, and to suggest some at least of the many directions in which those writings may be explored, and thus, if so may be, to bring new members into the large but comparatively restricted circle wherein she is regarded, not always as the first of English novelists, but at least as second to none in the quality of her work.¹⁹

Just at the same time as Helm was publishing, Rudyard Kipling and his wife passed through Winchester during a summer motoring trip, and Carrie Kipling

noted in her diary that Rudyard had been much impressed by the sight of the graves of Isaak Walton and Jane Austen in the Cathedral. In 1915, when the couple were staying in Bath, he read or re-read the novels, perhaps in consequence of this earlier trip, and thereafter wrote to his friend C.R.L. Fletcher: 'When she looks straight at a man or a woman, she is greater than those who were alive with her – by a whole head. Greater than Charles [Dickens], greater than Walter [Scott] – with a more delicate hand and cleaner scalpel.' 'The seeds of his 1924 story "The Janeites" which uses Austen, Freemasonry and the war to discuss a favourite theme about the bonds of comradeship, had been sown.'²⁰ When the story was published in *Debts and Credits* in 1926, Kipling added the poem 'Jane's Marriage' as a tailpiece; and as he was a very popular author, this brought the name 'Janeites' [*sic*] into the public arena and to the attention of a wider audience.

For the centenary of her death, in 1917, the Hill sisters organised the placing of a memorial tablet on the front of Chawton Cottage: 'Jane Austen / Lived here from 1809-1817 / And hence all her works / Were sent into the World. / Her admirers in this country and / in America have united to erect / this tablet. / Such art as hers can never grow old.' This ensured that Chawton Cottage was now firmly identified for pilgrims as Jane Austen's last home, but in the 1920s letters appeared in *The Times* commenting on its dilapidated condition: 'It is hardly creditable to the nation that the house in which our great woman novelist spent the latter years of her life and wrote or completed her masterpieces should be allowed to remain in a state evincing such scant respect for her memory.'²¹



R.W. Chapman

In 1923 R.W. Chapman edited the first scholarly version of the six novels for Oxford University Press, thus providing the basis for future serious academic study, as W.H. Helm had suggested. The edition was reviewed by E.M. Forster, who commented favourably on the textual improvements and additions Chapman had made, but still dwelt implicitly on the idea of Dear Aunt Jane. 'I am a Jane Austenite, and therefore slightly imbecile about Jane Austen. My fatuous expression, and airs of personal immunity – how ill they set on the face, say, of a Stevensonian! But Jane Austen is so different. She is my favourite author! I read and re-read, the mouth open and the mind closed. Shut up in measureless content, I greet her by the name of most kind hostess, while criticism slumbers.' Forster may have written this with mock modesty, tongue-in-cheek, but his choice of words is significant, as are his underlying thoughts. However, when Chapman followed up his work on the novels by publishing in 1932 the first complete collection of Jane Austen's letters, Forster was shocked out of this snug cocoon of Dear Aunt Jane-ism by the down-to-earth unsentimental reality of Jane's correspondence with Cassandra, which he found not at all to his liking. He now disclaimed being a Janeite: 'They are the letters of Miss Austen, not of Jane Austen ... Triviality, varied by touches of ill breeding

and of sententiousness, characterizes these letters as a whole, particularly the earlier letters'; and he also deplored 'that eighteenth-century frankness of hers which has somehow strayed into too small a room and become unacceptable.' He was horrified by her cheerfully callous joke regarding the ugliness of Mr Hall of Sherborne; and thought she had been very well advised to remove the reference to a natural daughter from the second edition of *Sense and Sensibility*.²²

An otherwise unknown biographer, David Rhydderch, saw nothing amiss in the letters, and added them to the list on the final page of his *Jane Austen her life and art* (1932), which demonstrates that by now the river of her cult was flowing fast and wide:

Her long eclipse is now at an end. Biographies follow one another at frequent intervals. ... Pilgrimages to her shrines are undertaken and illustrated, juvenilia unearthed, and collotype facsimiles in expensive editions published ... her quotations are classified, her allusions annotated, her orthography amended, and her archaeologisms strung together. Watermarks are examined, immature fragments scrutinised and her correspondence catalogued. Beside her tomb in Winchester, her name is writ on brass; and above, a Latin inscription beneath the harp of David in stained glass points her worth. The Maid of Orleans already looks down upon us [a small statue of Joan of Arc had been placed in the Cathedral in 1923]; and the day is not far distant when the 'Divine Jane', like patience on a monument smiling at fame, will keep her company.

At the end of the 1930s another distinct current appeared in the river – that of genuine popularisation, when the first film of one of the novels was made in America. It was a version – admittedly much garbled, but visually attractive – of *Pride and Prejudice*, with Laurence Olivier and Greer Garson in the leading roles. I have a copy of a cheap edition of *Pride and Prejudice* with half a dozen stills from the film added as illustrations, not dated but presumably published in 1940 when the film was released in the UK. Churchill is recorded as saying how much comfort he found in reading Jane Austen's novels during the grim days of wartime, and this cheerfully illustrated pocket edition would have been easy to put in a soldier's knapsack or evacuee's suitcase to provide relief during dark hours.

The letters to *The Times* in the 1920s complaining about the dilapidated state of Chawton Cottage had not gone unnoticed in Hampshire, and in 1940 a small group of residents – the three Misses Darnell, Mr W. Hugh Curtis the local antiquarian, together with the writer Miss Elizabeth Jenkins, who had published *Jane Austen, a biography* in 1938 – formed the Jane Austen Society. Their aim was minuted as 'the preservation of Jane Austen's house, the house being the property of Mr Edward Knight, of Chawton House', and the group sought to raise funds for this purpose. The original subscription was suggested as five shillings, 'but owing to the present circumstance of War Conditions, it was thought to be wiser to make the subscription half a crown and this sum was decided upon.' The Society published its first *Report* in 1942, when the membership had reached 90, and by 1946 it had reached 286. However, the funds raised were so limited

that it was obvious a purely local group could not succeed in its object, and a public appeal was made in *The Times* on 7 December of that year. This was seen by Mr T. Edward Carpenter, a solicitor in Mill Hill, North London, who offered to buy the Cottage outright 'to fulfil the double purpose of the preservation of a national monument, and a memorial to Mr Carpenter's son, who gave his life for his country in the late war.' Mr Carpenter set up a separate organisation, the Jane Austen Memorial Trust, to purchase the Cottage, the Trustees being himself, Mr W. Hugh Curtis, Miss Dorothy Darnell, Dr R.W. Chapman, and Miss Mary Lascelles. The sale was eventually completed, and two rooms were opened to the public on 23 July 1949 – the rest of the house was still occupied by sitting tenants.

After the formation of the Memorial Trust to purchase and manage the Cottage, the Jane Austen Society continued as a fund-raising and pressure group to support the upkeep of the building and to help in acquiring objects for display in the museum gradually being created therein, as the sitting tenants one by one moved out and more rooms could be opened to the public. The cult had therefore acquired a local habitation and a name – come out into the open, one might say, so there was no longer any need for 'Janeites' to use that name or think of themselves as an exclusive, isolated group – they were all now members of the Society; and the Annual General Meeting, held every summer in Chawton, enabled members to find new friends with this shared interest, as Mary Augusta Austen-Leigh had anticipated a century earlier. The Society was set on a more formal basis as an educational charity in 1994, with the stated intention 'to promote the advancement of education for the public benefit in the life and works of Jane Austen and the Austen family, in particular by publications or any other means that the Trustees may deem appropriate.' There are now about 2,000 members, who are encouraged to undertake original research, the results of which are published in the annual *Report* of the Society. Separate monographs are also published when suitable topics occur.

By the mid-20th century, the Victorian men of thought and literary education had been joined – if not indeed overtaken – by equally thoughtful and educated women. Miss Mary Lascelles had published *Jane Austen and her art* in 1939, the first full-length critical study of the novels; during the war years, very little could be undertaken in the way of research and publication – only eight items of Austenian interest appeared in print in 1945 – but from 1946 onwards numbers rose steadily, and in 2006 alone there were 142 separate publications listed, ranging from letters to *The Times* or *Times Literary Supplement*, through articles in newspapers and magazines, literary journals, social history journals, prefaces to new editions, student theses, doctoral theses, academic critical studies; and, on the popular front, completions of, sequels and prequels to, and spin-offs from, the novels.

The Jane Austen Society of North America (JASNA) was formed in the summer of 1979, holding their first meeting in New York in October of that year; thereafter the annual meetings have been held in different cities throughout the

continent. They now have about 4,000 members, and publish an annual journal, *Persuasions*. JASNA's intent is, in their words, to 'bring together scholars, enthusiasts, amateurs and professionals on equal terms to study and celebrate the genius of Jane Austen. We aim to encourage scholarly research on the one hand, but also to provide entertaining diversions. Our enquiries delve into Jane Austen's life, her writings and the era that gave shape to both.' Their interest in Jane Austen's life leads to the very practical outcome of making constant payments to St Nicholas church in Steventon for its upkeep and repairs, as well as assisting with funding specific projects at Chawton Cottage put forward by the Memorial Trust.

The Jane Austen Society of Australia (JASA) was founded in 1989, and is based in Sydney. Their aims are the same as those of JASNA; they have just over 600 members, hold regular meetings every two months with about 200 people attending at each, arrange an annual conference and study day, and publish a journal called *Sensibilities*. There is also a Jane Austen Society of Melbourne (JASM) founded in 1993, with about 150 members, whose aims are less wide-ranging: 'JASM has as its object to bring together people from all walks of life interested in meeting others who enjoy the writings of this exceptional author and wish to participate in discussions and study. We wish to help you educate yourself in this way – [Jane] Austen's novels tell us a great deal about ourselves as well as the way people lived two hundred years ago when Australia was founded.' The smallest foreign group is the Jane Austen Society of Buenos Aires (JASBA), founded in 1997; and the newest is the Jane Austen Society of Japan (JASJ), inaugurated at Meiji Gakuin University in Tokyo in 2006: 'The growing popularity of Jane Austen, as well as a more general focus on women writers of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, brought home to us the necessity of establishing this society.' Like the others, they intend to hold Annual General Meetings, and to publish a journal and critical works.

As opposed to these Jane Austen Societies which are basically educational charities, the Jane Austen Centre in Gay Street, Bath, was founded in 1998 as a purely commercial venture. It provides premises for the sale of Jane-Austen-related books and souvenirs, promoted the magazine, *Regency World*, and arranges the Bath Jane Austen Festival for a fortnight every September, during which time it sponsors events, lectures, tours of the city, etc. It is cheerfully and unashamedly popular, aimed at those members of the public who have been introduced to Jane Austen via the numerous TV and cinema films of recent years.

So how has the river of the Jane Austen cult changed over the last two centuries? The first idea, that her books were too natural to interest many readers, has died out; as also has any question about the morality of her works; and the social snobbery has gone – we do not care whether she was or was not a lady. The sentimental construct of 'Dear Aunt Jane' has gone, but has been replaced recently by another, that of Sweet Young Sexy Jane, overheated imaginations seeing her with pink cheeks and chestnut curls bobbing in the breeze as she scampers round the garden of Ashe Rectory chased by Tom Lefroy – an idea fanned by films, unreliable

biographies, and estate agents' blurbs. Pilgrimages – now called tours of Jane Austen Country – have boomed; memorabilia, manuscripts and autographs fetch astronomical prices; she is no longer put on a pedestal as the Immortal, the Divine Jane, but viewed by producers in the world of theatre and television as a highly profitable milch-cow. The intellectual snobbery still exists, however, and some academics believe that only they can properly understand and criticise the novels – an attitude which unfortunately results in publications replete with psychobabble and gobbledygook; some years ago one such academic stated that in her novels Jane Austen was 're-creating the essential ideological contradiction between the rhetoric of social obligation and the solipsistic experience of individuality and interiority'²³ – which sounds like something Sir Edward Denham might have uttered, in his capacity as Sanditon's resident literary critic.

But apart from this weed-clogged undertow of academic conceit, the river of enthusiasm for Jane and her works is now running full and wide, with every kind of reader at liberty to find and enjoy therein whatever particular aspect appeals to him or her, whether it be the naval and military history of the period, or the social history aspects of the literature, music, dances, fashions, food and architecture mentioned in the novels – or just simply to enjoy them for what they are, brilliantly composed, witty, and cheerful stories with a happy ending.

And now, referring back to the title of this article: 'her fame is far from universal' – in 2007 a volume of 464 pages, *The Reception of Jane Austen in Europe*, was published, which contains nineteen essays covering translations and opinions by scholars from France to Russia, Finland to Italy.²⁴ A century later, Mr Helm has been proved wrong indeed.

Notes

- 1 Malcolm Elwin, *Lord Byron's Wife* (London, 1962), p. 159.
- 2 Eva Mary Bell, *The Hamwood papers of the Ladies of Llangollen* (London, 1930), pp. 350-51.
- 3 Harriot Georgiana Munday, ed., *The Journal of Mary Frampton* (London, 1885), p. 226.
- 4 Samuel Henry Romilly, ed., *Romilly-Edgeworth Letters, 1813-1818* (London, 1936), p. 92.
- 5 Janet Todd and Linda Bree, eds., *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen: Later Manuscripts* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 234.
- 6 John A. Doyle, ed., *Memoir and correspondence of Susan Ferrier, 1782-1854* (London, 1898), p. 128.
- 7 All other quotations from reviewers and literary critics, unless specifically identified, are taken from B.C. Southam, ed., *Jane Austen, the Critical Heritage, 1811-70* (London, 1968), and vol. II, *1870-1940* (London, 1987), in which the reviews and articles are arranged chronologically.
- 8 Letter from 2nd Lord Farrer to R.A. Austen-Leigh, 4 June 1937.
- 9 Mary Augusta Austen-Leigh, *James Edward Austen Leigh* (privately printed, 1911), pp. 163-64.

- 10 Lady Richardson, ed., *Autobiography of Mrs Elizabeth Fletcher, 1770-1858* (Edinburgh, 1875), p. 299.
- 11 R.A. Austen-Leigh, *Austen Papers 1704-1856* (privately printed, 1942), pp. 296-312.
- 12 *Austen Papers*, pp. 312-320; *Atlantic Monthly*, 11 (1863), pp. 235-40.
- 13 James Edward Austen-Leigh, ed. Kathryn Sutherland, *A Memoir of Jane Austen, and other family recollections* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 104-05.
- 14 Charles Edward Mudie (1818-1890) founded a circulating library in London in 1852, and by 1870 Mudie's Select Library had become pre-eminent in its distribution and supply of literature, sending out boxes of books to subscribers all over the world; the business eventually closed in 1937.
- 15 *Memoir*, p. 69.
- 16 Lord Brabourne: *Letters of Jane Austen* (London, 1884), vol. 1, p. 51.
- 17 Edith Edlmann: *Temple Bar*, 94 (1892), pp. 343-50.
- 18 Constance Hill: *Jane Austen, her homes and her friends* (London, 1904), p. 1.
- 19 W. H. Helm, *Jane Austen and her country-house comedy* (London, 1909), pp. 33-4, 43, 206-07, 233-34, 243, 248-49.
- 20 Andrew Lycett: *Rudyard Kipling* (London, 2000), pp. 539, 613.
- 21 *The Times*, 30 December 1925, and 1 January 1926.
- 22 E.M. Forster, *Abinger Harvest* (Penguin, 1967), pp. 162, 164, 173-79.
- 23 James Thompson: *Between Self and World, the Novels of Jane Austen* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988), p. 13.
- 24 B.C. Southam and Anthony Mandal, eds., *The Reception of Jane Austen in Europe* (London, 2007).

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The Centenary Tablet

Jane Hurst

How many of us, when visiting the Cottage at Chawton, have walked straight past the front of the house without giving it a second look? Like myself, you may be intent on seeing the rooms in which Jane lived with her mother and sister or be keen to enjoy the lovely garden.



Jane Austen's House before the Centenary Tablet

While looking in the *Alton Gazette* of 1917, I came across the headline 'Jane Austen Centenary. Tablet Unveiled at Chawton. Worldwide Appreciation'. It was, of course, a report of the anniversary of Jane's death, not of the move to Chawton as is being celebrated in 2009. It seemed appropriate that it was her demise that was being marked during those dark years of the First World War, an event which claimed the lives of Col. Sir Evelyn Ridley Bradford and Capt. Richard Brodnax Knight, members of Jane's extended family.

The article began:—

The county of Hampshire among English counties stands renowned for the many writers of genius and distinction to which it has given birth and asylum. Three [*sic*] writers come inevitably to the mind – Jane Austen, Miss Mitford, Miss Charlotte Yonge (Otterbourne), Gilbert White, whose works have lived beyond the stage of erratic and irresponsible criticism and by the judgement of the ages they stand on a plane of imperishable renown. Wherever the English language is spoken and beyond in remote regions they are vividly read and appreciated for what they really are – faithful pictures of English life and character, whose very naturalness of portrayal arrests the reader. Jane Austen in this temple of fame – in the hierarchy of the realm of art – occupies a pre-eminent position, and her works continue to cheer and comfort numberless homes. And shortly, what constitutes her special claim

upon the affections of her thousands of readers? In a word, her naturalness of portrayal, her very characters live – their clean, wholesome minds, their natural bearing in thought and action – evokes a responsive chord. True to art, Jane Austen had attained excellence in the most difficult sphere of all – the gift of thinking, acting, and writing naturally.

For Chawton, Jane Austen has created an immortal name. It was from this ideal Hampshire village in an ancient cottage now partly used as a club (and where Mr. and Mrs. Stevens reside) that Jane Austen lived from 1809 to 1817, and it was from this house that all her works were sent out into the world. Winchester Cathedral contains memorials of her, but it is fitting that her abode at Chawton during those eventful years should be especially honoured and commemorated by some permanent memorial. It was felt by those who in this country and in America hold her works in grateful affection that the centenary of her death, which occurred on the 18th of July, 1817, would form an appropriate occasion for marking in some distinctive way her Chawton home. Miss Constance Hill, author of “Jane Austen, her Homes and her Friends.” of Grove Cottage, Frognal, Hampstead, N. W., who with her sister is such a devoted admirer of the writer, pioneered the movement which resulted in the placing upon Chawton Cottage of an oaken tablet (protected by copper where rain would settle) and bearing the following inscription written by her:–

“Jane Austen lived here from 1809 to 1817, and it was from this house that all her works were sent into the world.

“Her admirers in the country and in America have united to erect this Tablet.”

This tablet, standing out in bold relief lettering, had been executed by Mr. Evelyn Simmons, Lic.R.I.B.A., after a design by Miss E. G. Hill. The frame represents the pediment and pilasters of a window in 4, Sydney Place, Bath, where Jane Austen and her family lived from 1801 till 1804. The raised pattern on the oak surrounding the bronze is copied from embroidery on a muslin scarf worked by Jane Austen. The committee who arranged the details consisted of the Earl of Iddesleigh, Lord Latimer, Sir Frederick Pollock, Bart., Sir Robert Hudson, Sir Wm. Robertson Nicoll, the Dean of Norwich, Mr Clarence Graff (from New York), Mr. W. D. Howells (U.S.A.), Mr. W. J. Locke, and Mr. C. K. Shorter.

The response to the appeal made has been widespread and most hearty. Donations have poured in varying from 3gns. to 6d. One gift comes in “memory of a gentleman” who for 60 years loved the works of Jane Austen and found them his greatest refreshment in the wilds of the Bush of Australia. After 40 years’ absence he made a pilgrimage to see her grave in Winchester Cathedral. A Scotch lawyer writes that he knows the novels so well that he could himself write Catherine Morland’s Journal of her entertainments in Bath, alluded to in “Northanger Abbey.” Many of the subscribers to the memorial wrote in appreciative terms of the undertaking to Miss Constance Hill, including Mr. Austen Dobson, Lady Ritchie, Dr. Fearon (Archdeacon

of Winchester), Archdeacon Brook Deedes, Sir William W. Portal, and Mr. Richard Bentley.



After the Centenary Tablet was erected

The newspaper article goes on to describe the unveiling of the tablet which was performed by Sir Frederick Pollock in front of Lady Bradford, W. Austen Leigh (greatnephew of the author), Mrs Montagu Knight, Mrs Lionel Knight, Capt. and Mrs Brooke Knight, John Lane (of The Bodley Head) and Miss Lefroy among others. In his speech, Sir Frederick mentioned his brother Walter Herries Pollock, who lived across the Winchester Road in Chawton Lodge. Walter was also an author, having written many books including *Jane Austen, her Contemporaries and Herself*, *Animals that have Owned Us*, *King Zub* and *A Nine Men's Morris*.

The next speaker was Miss Constance Hill. She quoted Dr. Johnson's words as being especially applicable to Jane Austen: 'To be able to furnish pleasure that is harmless pleasure – pure and unalloyed, is as great a power as man can possess.' Miss Hill then talked about some of the many letters she had received from subscribers and reminded people that the donation list was not closed. They wanted 'to do something for the little village of Steventon, Hants, where Jane Austen was born. They wanted to provide a children's library comprising elevating literature and to bear the name of Jane Austen. They also wanted to be able to purchase a small scholarship to encourage the school children to do something better.' Did these things ever happen?

Mr Clarence Graff of New York brought the proceedings to a close by saying what a great privilege and honour it was 'to express on behalf of Americans the great pleasure they derived in reading Jane Austen's works'. He continued that 'it seemed an extraordinary thing in these days of war that they could turn aside from the stern discussions to come together on a day to pay this mark of respect to the memory of Jane Austen.'

So next time you visit the Cottage in Chawton, do take a closer look at the anniversary tablet, which is nearly 100 years old itself.

Jane Austen Studies 2007

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Notes on sales 2008

Christine Penney

The most exciting item to come up for sale during 2008 was undoubtedly the presentation copy of the first edition of *Emma*, sent by the publishers to Jane Austen's close friend, Anne Sharp, who had been the governess at Godmersham 1804-1806. Four odd volumes of early editions of the novels from her library also came up in the same sale, but it was clearly the publisher's inscription 'From the author' in *Emma* which drove up the price for that novel to the highest ever recorded for a Jane Austen first edition. David Gilson has written an account of this copy for the journal of the Jane Austen Society's Northern Branch, *Impressions* (No. 27, September 2008, p.11), and there is also an article in *Jane Austen's Regency world*, issue 35.

First and early editions

Sense and Sensibility

A copy of the first edition, 1811 (Gilson A1) was Lot 424 at Dominic Winter on 18 June. All half-titles were present, together with the terminal blank in Vol. 2 (but not in the other two vols.). It was bound in contemporary half calf, gilt, with some minor signs of wear. It bore the armorial bookplate of the bibliophile, Thomas Hammond Foxcroft of Halsteads. The estimate was £10,000-£15,000 but the sale price doubled this, rising to £30,000.

Bonhams, on 24 June, offered, at Lot 108, Vols. 2 and 3 only of the second edition, 1813 (Gilson A2). These had the half-titles and were bound in contemporary half calf, lacking the spines; the front free endpapers were inscribed 'A. Sharp 1830'. Anne Sharp's odd volumes of *Mansfield Park* and *Pride and Prejudice* appeared in the same Lot (see below for details). The entire Lot was estimated at £1,000 - £2,000 and sold for £2,640. Copies of Vols. 2 and 3 only were also offered by Librerie Antiquarie (Bergamo, Italy) on abebooks for £2,741.32, described in Italian.

Lot 395A at Cheffins, Cambridge, on 21 February, was a copy of the first Bentley edition, 1833 (Gilson D1), somewhat stained and rebacked, estimated at £100-150 and selling for £120. Another copy was Lot 423 at Dominic Winter on 18 June, bound in contemporary half morocco with marbled endpapers and with the contemporary bookplate of A.W. Hall. The estimate was £400-£600 and it sold for £520. This copy is now offered by Peter Harrington on abebooks, for £1,500.

Pride and Prejudice

Lot 157 at Sotheby's on 17 July was a copy of the first edition, 1813 (Gilson A3). It had the half-titles and was bound in very worn contemporary calf, with some browning and staining. The estimate was £8,000-£10,000 and it sold for £12,000. A more handsome copy, bound in 19th-century calf, gilt, was advertised

by Bauman Rare Books in the *New York Times Book Review* on 3 February, priced at \$82,000. Another copy, for £45,000, was offered on abebooks and also in his catalogue 2008/2, page 3, by Adrian Harrington, bound in contemporary tree calf with black morocco double spine labels and complete with half-titles. The titlepages bore the unobtrusive [*sic*] inscriptions of Arthur Vesey, 1813. The same copy, with identical description and price, was also Item 1 in Peter Harrington's Catalogue 61 (presumably they are brothers, though such duplication of effort is somewhat puzzling). B & B Rare Books (New York) had a copy on abebooks for £9,924.67, with the bookplate of Lady Tara in Vol.1. It was bound in contemporary half calf with marbled boards. The half-titles, the titlepages of Vols. 1 and 3, B1 in Vol. 1 and pp. 197-212 in Vol. 3 were all supplied in 'early expert facsimile'.

Woolley & Wallis (Salisbury) offered a copy of the second edition, 1813 (Gilson A4) at Lot 83 on 2 April. Lacking half-titles, and with the titlepage to Vol.2 mounted on a guard, it was bound in contemporary mottled and green-stained calf with gilt spines. The estimate was £1,500-£2,500 and it sold for £3,200. Another copy was Lot 444 at Dominic Winter on 23 July. This was a very poor copy which had evidently been read to death; it lacked Vol. 3 and an early owner had also indulged in some marginal ink scoring. It was bound in rubbed and worn contemporary half calf, lacked the half-titles, was foxed and stained and had a few leaves detached. It was given a low estimate, at £300-£400, and made £460. Andria Vertbois Books offered, on abebooks, a much better copy for £5,995. It was bound without half-titles in contemporary half calf, with marbled paper boards, with some surface wear, an ink name on the corner of the first page of text in Vol. 1 and the same name excised on the corner of the titlepage. This sounds remarkably like the copy in my 2007 report, sold by Bloomsbury Auctions, apart from the location of the ink name which, in the Bloomsbury copy, was also on the titlepage. A copy coming directly from the family estate of Sir Robert Johnson Eden, Baronet (1774-1844), with his armorial bookplate on each pastedown, was offered on abebooks, also by Andria Vertbois and for the same price (£5,995). He describes it as 'an honest original set', bound without half-titles in "uniform contemporary marbled calf" – presumably he means half calf with marbled paper boards – 'in good unrestored condition', with the marker ribbons still intact. 'Overall a very honest set', he reiterates; what can a dishonest set be like, one must wonder? Bernard Quaritch had a copy on abebooks for £12,000, in contemporary quarter polished calf with grey drab boards and with the half-titles. Clarel Rare Books had a copy described as 'an appealing set', in contemporary three-quarter (though the photograph shows half) brown calf over marbled boards, with the half-titles. All three preliminary blanks bore the signature of Letitia Mary Chambers, Clover Hill, and an indecipherable ink gift inscription, dated 1815[?] was on each titlepage. The price was £8,726.86.

A copy of the third edition, 1817 (Gilson A5) was Lot 328 at Lyon and Turnbull on 16 January. It was in original boards with paper spine labels and uncut. The estimate was £1,000-£1,500. Examination of a library copy of this edition, Deirdre Le Faye tells me, led a potential purchaser to reject it on the grounds of its

‘nasty paper, small print and massive number of typos’! The ultimate purchaser had no such scruples, paying well over the odds at £3,400.

Anne Sharp’s odd volume of this edition was part of Lot 108 at Bonhams on 24 June, mentioned above, with ‘A. Sharp’ inscribed on the title page. It was Vol. 2 only, lacked the half-title and was bound in contemporary half calf, lacking the lower cover and with the upper cover detached.

A copy of the first Bentley edition, 1833 (Gilson D5) was Item 28 in Peter Harrington’s Catalogue 56. It was bound in contemporary maroon half calf, with a dark green spine label, marbled sides and edges and with plain sage green endpapers. The price was £1,500.

Mansfield Park

Lot 239 at Bloomsbury Auctions on 13 March was a copy of the first edition, 1814, (Gilson A6). A former owner was E.H.A Elliott, whose contemporary inscription was in each volume. Vol. 1 was also inscribed ‘from Anne Carnegie’. The binding was 19th-century half calf (done for Sotheran), the spines gilt in compartments, with double morocco spine labels, rather rubbed. Half titles and the advertisement leaf at the end of Vol. 3 were present. Some marginal defects, poor repairs affecting the text and browning and spotting affected the estimate, which was only £2,000-£3,000; it sold for £3,200. This copy subsequently turned up on abebooks, with Andria Vertbois, for £5,495. Another copy, of Vol. 2 only of this edition, was part of Lot 108 at Bonhams on 24 June (mentioned above). This was bound in contemporary half calf, bore the signature ‘A. Sharp’ on the half-title and, like the other items from her library in this Lot, had clearly been well used, with several gatherings working loose. Hermit Hill Books had a copy on abebooks for £14,634.17, with an owner’s name (unidentified) in pen on the front free endpaper. It was bound with half-titles and the advertisement leaf in contemporary leather, rebaked. Bernard Quaritch also had a copy on abebooks, for £25,000. Described as an extremely fine set, it had all half-titles and the advertisement leaf and was bound in contemporary marbled boards with dark brown calf spines and vellum corners.

The first Bentley edition, 1833 (Gilson D3) was offered by Broadhurst’s of Southport on abebooks, for \$1,525.89. It was in the original plum-coloured cloth, lacking the lower paper spine label, and preserved in a lined solander box. Another copy, also on abebooks, was offered by Peter Harrington, for £1,500. This was also in the original cloth, with two black paper spine labels and the bookplate of Pamela Lister.

Emma

Anne Sharp’s presentation copy of the first edition, 1816 (Gilson A8) was Lot 107 at Bonham’s on 24 June, immediately preceding a collection of four, less handsome, odd volumes from her collection at Lot 108. Anne Sharp’s signature was on the fly-leaf of each volume and ‘From the author’ was written on the fly-leaf of Vol. 1, probably by the publisher’s clerk, as it is not in Jane Austen’s

handwriting. Jane Austen was allowed twelve free copies of *Emma*, in addition to the dedication copy given to the Prince Regent, and Anne Sharp's copy was one of three sent to persons not members of the family, the others being Lady Morley and James Stanier Clarke (though Anne Sharp was more of a personal friend). The binding was contemporary half calf, with gilt panelled spines, rubbed. The half-titles were present. The modest estimate of £50,000-£70,000 was well exceeded, at £180,000 – the highest price for a Jane Austen item yet recorded. This copy is now on abebooks with Peter Harrington, priced at £325,000, and described as being housed in a crimson full leather solander box, made by the Chelsea Bindery. Another copy was Lot 52 at Bloomsbury Auctions on 30 October. Bound in 19th-century green half calf over marbled boards, with bookplates of Crewe Hall in each volume, it lacked half-titles and the blank leaf P6 at the end of Vol. 1. The estimate was £6,000-£8,000, but it sold for only £6,500. Clarel Rare Books offered a copy on abebooks for £14,812.64. Half-titles are not mentioned but the binding was full reddish-brown morocco by Zaehnsdorf. Dragon Books (Los Angeles) had a copy on abebooks for £29,590.83, bound in contemporary full tan calf but lacking the half-titles to Vols. 2 and 3. Gibb's Bookshop (Manchester) had a copy, lacking Vol. 3, bound in the original blue paper boards with cream paper spines and with both half-titles present. The price for this imperfect set was £10,000. Item 2 in Peter Harrington's Catalogue 61 was a copy in contemporary mottled calf, rebacked in Regency style, probably by Lubbock of Newcastle, whose ticket was present, together with the bookplates and library labels of John Waldie. The price was £16,500. St Mary's Books had a copy on abebooks for \$27,466, with half-titles and a previous owner's inscription in pencil on the titlepage of each volume. The binding was contemporary half calf with marbled boards.

Northanger Abbey and Persuasion

Lot 241 at Bloomsbury Auctions on 13 March was a copy of the first edition, 1818 (Gilson A9). Vols. 3 and 4 lacked the half-titles and Vol. 4 lacked the final blanks. It was bound in contemporary half calf, rebacked, preserving the old spines, and had the ownership inscription of Mrs Mercer, 1823, in each volume. Estimated at £2,000-£3,000 it sold for £3,600. Another copy was offered in Adrian Harrington's Catalogue 2008/1 (page 1). It was bound in recent mid blue calf over marbled boards without half-titles. The price was £7,500. Bernard Quaritch had a copy on abebooks for \$14,495.95. It was described as a fine copy in early polished pale calf and green morocco labels, with the half-titles. Sims Reed Ltd had a copy on abebooks for £8,500. This was in full contemporary calf with black leather labels and presumably included half-titles, whose absence is not mentioned. Bernard Shapero had a copy on abebooks for \$13,540, with the half-titles and bound in contemporary quarter deep green roan and marbled boards.

The first Bentley edition, 1833 (Gilson D4) was offered by Peter Harrington on abebooks for \$1,220.71. This was in late 19th-century half calf with marbled boards.

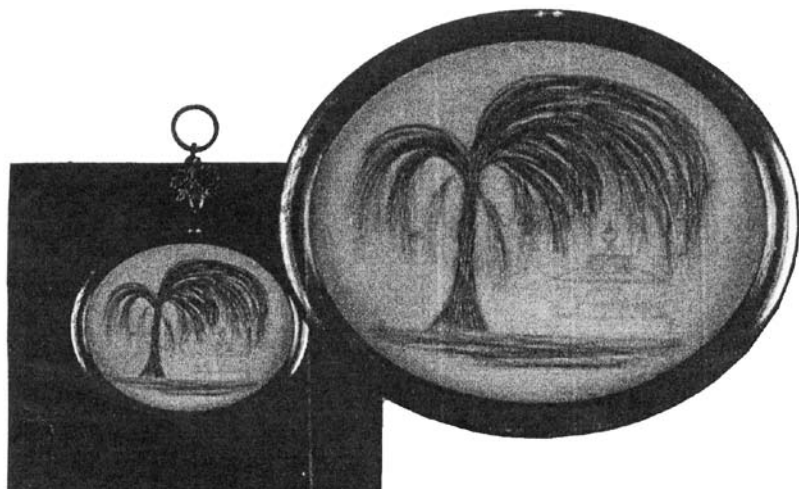
Collected editions

The first collected Bentley edition, 1833 (Gilson D6) was offered by Adrian Harrington, as ‘a truly uncommon set’, on abebooks for £5,000. It was in a contemporary full polished tan calf binding, with twin labels and extra gilt to the spines and had the general titlepage to each volume. What may (or may not) have been another set of Gilson D6 was Lot 88 at Brightwells (Leominster) on 9 April, described sparingly as ‘Austen, Jane. Novels, c.1833, half calf, marbled boards (5)’. The estimate was only £50-£60 but evidently word had got about since it sold for £1,700. It may, of course, have been a collection of the ‘Standard Novels’ issues, but it is impossible to tell from the description.

Other material

Lot 127 at John Nicholson’s (Haslemere) on 25 November was a copy of the second edition of James Edward Austen-Leigh’s *Memoir of Jane Austen*, 1870. It was bound in the original cloth and offered with two other unspecified volumes, estimated at £15-£20. The Lot sold for £35.

Adrian Harrington, in his Catalogue 2008/2 (page 5) had a copy of *Celebrated Crimes* by Alexander Dumas, 1843, finely bound in contemporary tan half calf. It bore the heraldic bookplate of Montagu George Knight. The catalogue entry was full of howlers, informing the reader that Montagu was Jane Austen’s nephew and the son of her adopted brother Edward Austen Knight [sic], whereas he was actually Jane Austen’s great-nephew and Edward’s grandson – and Edward was of course Jane Austen’s blood brother (and changed his name simply to Edward Knight). Perhaps the bookseller could have charged more than the £295 requested had he got his facts right.



Dominic Winter Sale, Lot. no. 425

Dominic Winter offered a lock of what he believed to be Jane Austen’s hair on 18 June (Lot 425). The description read: ‘A lock of fine light brown hair,

intricately arranged in the shape of a weeping willow [a symbol of mourning] with its branches shading the decorated memorial gravestone, the name Jane Austen lettered in hair strands upon the gravestone, skilfully glued on to an oval piece of vellum measuring 55 x 75mm (approx 2¼ x 3 inches) and mounted in a 19th century black lacquered papier mache silhouette frame with brass-rimmed oval glass and a gilt acorn and oak leaves, clasp and hook, backed with paper and dark red velvet'. Admitting it was a 'gamble' (a remark picked up by *The Times* in its report of the sale two days later), Dominic Winter acknowledged that its authenticity was unproven. But his estimate of £3,000-£5,000 proved extremely accurate, since it sold for £4,800. This item is the subject of a short report in *Jane Austen's Regency world*, issue 35. Its vendor apparently found it in an antique shop in Worcestershire about twenty years ago. The buyer was Holybourne Rare Books of Alton, acting for a private collector. Deirdre Le Faye adds the following note: 'It is inaccurate to say that the name is written upon a "gravestone", as this is in fact a representation of a classical sarcophagus. An article about the object also appeared in *Book and Magazine Collector* no. 295, in which Dominic Winter added that the backing of laid paper and old velvet looked closer to the mid-19th century than to the time of Jane Austen's death. This mid-19th century dating is far more likely to be correct; it had certainly been the custom from the late 18th

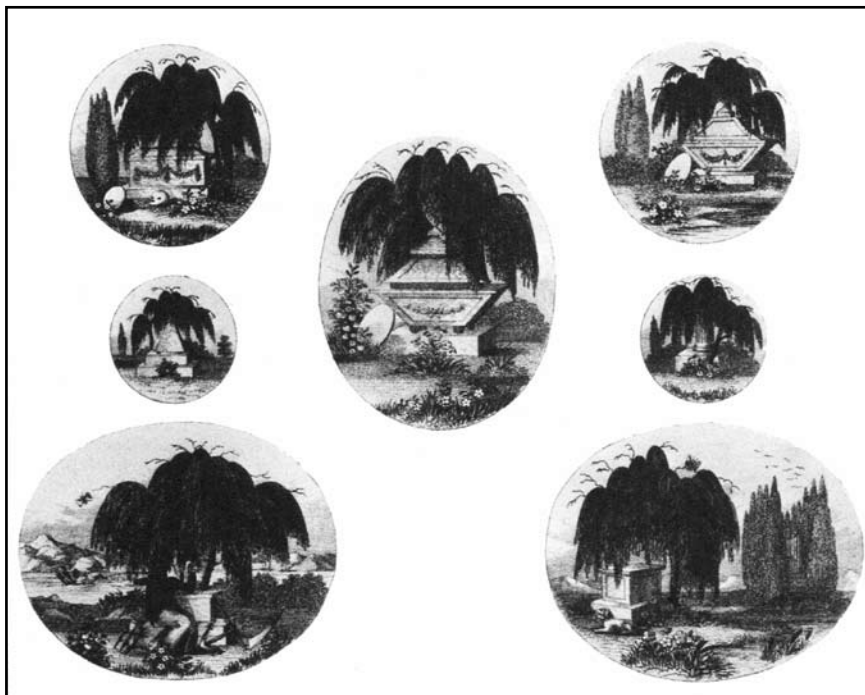


Plate from an unidentified hairworker's catalogue, c. 1840, Shirley Bury, Sentimental Jewellery (London, HMSO, 1985), p. 26

century onwards to enclose small locks of hair in rings, brooches, or lockets, as personal jewellery, but these complete memorial pictures in hair-work, mounted in a frame and intended to be hung on the wall, date from ca.1830 to at least the 1860s. An illustration from a professional hair-worker's catalogue, ca.1840, appears in Shirley Bury's *Sentimental Jewellery* (London 1985), p. 26, and it can be seen that the designs are very similar to this piece. Although we tend to think that the name "Jane Austen" is unique, this of course is not the case, and the picture was probably made from the hair of a mid-Victorian namesake; for example, there was a Mrs Jane Austen, widow of Benjamin Austen, who died in Ramsgate on 19 January 1837 aged 86. Such a date would accord far better with the style of the hair-work picture.

Lot 200 on 10 December at a sale in the Jubilee Auction Room at Pewsey was described as 'An early 19th-century portrait of a seated young lady believed to be Jane Austen'. It had a label on the verso claiming it was painted by Roger Fenton when a boy. Research by Deirdre Le Faye enabled her to tell the auctioneers that since Roger Fenton was not born until 1819 the sitter could not possibly have been Jane Austen. This may be the reason that it failed to sell and has returned to the vendor, who, one hopes, has learned the lesson that portraits of youngish women in any form of early 19th-century dress are not necessarily Jane Austen.

The Times of 11 June reported that a miniature of Tom Lefroy, painted by George Englehart in 1798, would be on sale at the Grosvenor House Art and Antiques Fair the following week, priced at £50,000. The vendors (Judy and Brian Harden, dealers in miniatures) tell me it was not sold and remains with them, since the Jane Austen House is hoping to purchase it. No doubt they will tell us if they do.

Living in ruins: Jane Austen and the monasteries

Claire Lamont

I should like to thank the President, the Chairman and the Society very warmly for inviting me to talk about Jane Austen here today. I look forward to sharing with you some ideas on what may appear an odd topic, Jane Austen and the monasteries. Jane Austen was a comic novelist who set her novels in her own contemporary world. Why therefore should she make any reference to monasteries? After all, in her lifetime there were almost no working monasteries, only ruins, stark or majestic, on the landscape. Yet she refers to monasteries not only in *Northanger Abbey*, but also, more briefly, in her *Juvenilia* and three of her other novels. My plan is to put these references together so as to look at her use of monasteries in an historical and literary context.

The first mention of monasteries in Jane Austen's work is in her *Juvenilia*, in her brief 'History of England', which she dated 1791, when she was fifteen years old. In the section on 'Henry the 8th' she writes:

The Crimes and Cruelties of this Prince, were too numerous to be mentioned ... and nothing can be said in his vindication, but that his abolishing Religious Houses and leaving them to the ruinous depredations of time has been of infinite use to the landscape of England in general, which probably was a principal motive for his doing it, since otherwise why should a Man who was of no Religion himself be at so much trouble to abolish one which had for Ages been established in the Kingdom.¹

This is a fierce paragraph for one so young. It combines awareness of the picturesque effect of monastic ruins on the landscape with scorn for the irreligious king who had caused them to be in that state. Reference to the 'Cruelties' of Henry VIII probably comes from Jane Austen's reading of Oliver Goldsmith's *History of England* of 1771, on which her satirical history draws. Goldsmith had referred to Henry VIII as 'cruel from a depraved disposition alone; cruel in government, cruel in religion, and cruel in his family.'² The irony in attributing Henry's actions to a particularly eighteenth-century appreciation of ruins in a landscape is probably inspired by a remark by William Gilpin: 'Certain however it is, that no man, since Henry the eighth, has contributed more to adorn this country with picturesque ruins.'³ The young writer presents the king as, like herself, an admirer of Gilpin.⁴

The medieval monasteries of England and Wales had been suppressed by Henry VIII between 1536 and 1540, partly as a result of his quarrel with the Pope and partly to bring into the royal coffers revenue from the disposal of monastic assets. It was one of stages of the English Reformation. The deliberate suppression of what has been estimated as more than eight hundred monasteries was unparalleled, involving not only the dispersal of religious items, libraries, and works of art, but the destruction of many buildings. In some cases the buildings

were retained for religious or secular use; in others, after they had been stripped of any valuable contents and the roof removed, the ruins were simply abandoned, leaving the stone to be gradually removed by local people as building material. Many smaller monastic buildings simply disappeared. It was not until the early nineteenth century that working monasteries started to reappear in England. In the intervening centuries, between the sixteenth and the nineteenth, they might have been forgotten except that in many cases the roofless ruins remained to pose questions to succeeding generations.

The typical Protestant view of the monasteries was that they were dedicated to a corrupt form of religion, were too rich, and housed monks living idle and self-indulgent lives. A reluctance to question this view was nurtured by anti-Catholicism in general, fear of Tudor and later governments, and also by the fact that many people had gained materially from the dissolution of the monasteries. Those who were in favour with Henry VIII may have gained land; but when a major monastery was being pillaged there were pickings for all, and even the poor could come away with items of furniture or stone for building. One result was a certain reluctance to question whether the destruction was justified, for fear that, if it were not, one might be asked to hand back what one had acquired.

Naturally Catholics shared Shakespeare's lament over 'Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang'.⁵ Margaret Aston has pointed out, however, that many people who were willing to adopt the reformed religion, from the sixteenth century on, nevertheless regretted the destruction of monastic buildings and the dispersal of their contents. The monastic ruins gave impetus to antiquarian study, and are important to the development of history in that coming to terms with these ruins developed the study of the recent past. Ruins had been studied before, but largely Roman ruins.⁶ Investigation of monastic ruins necessarily required the study of English history of relatively recent centuries.

The eighteenth century saw a mellowing of the attitude towards monasteries. Abbey ruins came to be seen as both picturesque and visitable. Gilpin, visiting Tintern in 1770, noted that the grass inside the Abbey had been cut, and that the local poor offered themselves as guides.⁷ Eighteenth-century poets invoked monastic ruins as sites of contemplation and sensibility. Although some of these writers would declare themselves as either Catholic or Protestant the mood of many of them is of a secular or unaffiliated spirituality. If it were necessary, in such writing, to indicate an agent in the creation of ruins that agent is often said to be 'the hand of time'. That gets over the problem of tyrannical monarchs and over-zealous reformers. The beauty of the architecture, once Gothic architecture had come to be appreciated, added to the emotional response to the ruins, and their incompleteness, for those of a more rational cast of mind, invited antiquarian study.

The second half of the eighteenth century found another way of presenting monasteries, the Gothic. Relevant to my present discussion is one particular type of Gothic, what one might call ecclesiastical Gothic. This is the lurid presentation of churches and monasteries, causing frissons of fear in gloomy architecture. Churches

are haunted by the ghostly appearance of the dead, and the ready juxtaposition of the sacred and the damned. The notorious monasteries and convents of the Gothic novel tend to be set in continental Europe, and the description of superstition and institutional repression within them contains a good deal of both the Protestant fear of Catholicism and complacency over British liberties. Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), a notorious example of ecclesiastical Gothic, has nothing to say in favour of monasticism, his monasteries, set in Madrid at some undisclosed date, being scenes of tyranny veiling itself under religion. Jane Austen's view of *The Monk* is indicated by its being the boasted reading of John Thorpe in *Northanger Abbey*.⁸ Women writers of Gothic novels, of whom Ann Radcliffe is the most celebrated, show convents as either places of imprisonment or places of retreat for harassed heroines.

Among Jane Austen's characters the one most likely to have admired monastic ruins is surely Marianne Dashwood, appealing as they did to the responses of sensibility and the picturesque. Instead the reference to a monastery in *Sense and Sensibility* is rather different. It comes towards the end of the novel and Marianne has returned home after the life-threatening illness caused by Willoughby's dereliction. She announces to her sister her plan for taking long walks:

we will walk to Sir John's new plantations at Barton-Cross, and the Abbeyland; and we will often go to the old ruins of the Priory, and try to trace its foundations as far as we are told they once reached.⁹

Marianne is not here responding to the Priory ruins in the romantic style which her earlier sensibility would have brought forth. Instead she is responding with the rational approach of an antiquary, tracing 'its foundations as far as we are told they once reached.' This brief monastic reference functions as a measure of Marianne's mental development, from an emotional, solipsistic response, to a rational one willing to investigate the nation's history.

Another heroine naturally given to sensibility is Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park*. When on the visit to Sotherton the party is shown the disused chapel, Fanny expresses her disappointment to Edmund:

This is not my idea of a chapel. There is nothing awful here, nothing melancholy, nothing grand. Here are no aisles, no arches, no inscriptions, no banners. No banners, cousin, to be 'blown by the night wind of Heaven.' No signs that a 'Scottish monarch sleeps below.'¹⁰

These references are to the description of Melrose Abbey in Walter Scott's *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* of 1805, the poem which gave Melrose its fame as a romantic site. Of course none of the features Fanny mentions will be found in the chapel at Sotherton, since that was an ordinary room 'fitted up for the purpose of devotion' in the late seventeenth century. Fanny's far-fetched yearning for something melancholy, grand, and historically resonant is a manifestation of her sensibility, and also perhaps some response to the atmosphere at Sotherton. Scott's poem shows Melrose Abbey in its prime, in the celebration of a mass to unite the warring parties of the Scottish border, and also in its ruined, post-reformation state.¹¹ Turning back to the abandoned chapel at Sotherton, it may be said that in

Jane Austen's world religious observance is not changed by the convulsions of Reformation but by an encroaching secularism, a new kind of thoughtlessness and materialism.

This leads me to ask, what did Jane Austen, daughter of a Protestant clergyman, think about monasteries? What lay behind her view of 'the abolishing of Religious Houses' in that precocious and skittish 'History of England'? She had some first-hand experience. In 1785 she was sent to a boarding school in Reading, where she stayed for less than two years, while she was nine and ten years old.¹² The school was housed within the ruins of Reading Abbey. It occupied a thirteenth-century gatehouse and a house beside it from whose garden it was possible to look over the ruins of the abbey as the ground fell away down to the river Kennet.

If one were to choose an abbey for a demonstration of the violence and impiety of Henry VIII's treatment of the monasteries, one might well choose Reading. Reading Abbey was a royal foundation and one of the largest of the medieval Abbeys. No doubt this was one reason why the king could not brook the opposition of the last Abbot, Hugh Cook Faringdon, who ended his life being hanged, drawn and quartered in front of his Abbey church, one of the martyrs of the dissolution. The physical destruction of Reading, which was the work of Protector Somerset in Edward VI's reign, was greater than at most other monasteries.¹³ How much of that did Jane Austen know, either at school or later? We cannot get behind the inscrutable irony of the fifteen-year-old historian who wrote of Somerset, 'This Man was on the whole of a very amiable Character, and is somewhat of a favourite with me' (*J* 182). Today the ruins at Reading seem gaunt and tragic, pressed on by the town itself and by the notorious Reading Gaol. Lacking the 'high Gothic windows' that Catherine Morland expects at Northanger (*NA* 164), the ruins at Reading are not obviously picturesque, and Gilpin offers no description of them.

By the second half of the eighteenth century historians and commentators, assisted by the defeat of the Jacobites in the mid-century, were coming to be open in their condemnation of Henry VIII's treatment of the monasteries. It is significant that Goldsmith frees himself from the pressure that many previous Protestant historians had felt under to lessen the guilt of Henry VIII because of the part he played in precipitating the Reformation in England. Goldsmith speaks frankly:

Our divines have taken some pains to vindicate the character of this brutal prince, as if his conduct, and our reformation had any connexion with each other. There is nothing so absurd as to defend the one by the other; the most noble designs are brought about by the most vicious instruments; for we see even that cruelty and injustice were thought necessary to be employed in our holy redemption.¹⁴

This is a stance which makes it possible to be an Anglican as Jane Austen was, and nonetheless detest Henry VIII.

There were other reasons why someone in Jane Austen's day might take a less partisan view of the dissolution of the monasteries. One arose from the French Revolution: in 1790 the National Assembly in Paris suppressed the French

monasteries and confiscated church lands.¹⁵ The response of many in Protestant Britain was one of horror. Why, we might ask, were people who defended the dissolution of the English monasteries in the sixteenth century appalled by the same happening in France in the eighteenth? There is an important difference between the two events: the Reformation was a battle between Catholic and Protestant; what was happening in France arose from the tussle between Christianity and Enlightenment atheism. That adds a contemporary nuance to Jane Austen's description of Henry VIII as 'a Man of no religion'. He did not fail at his religion; he had none – a concept commoner in the eighteenth century than the sixteenth.

Another significant point is that the campaign for Catholic Emancipation, which culminated in the Act of 1829, was a matter of public debate throughout Jane Austen's life. Her 'History of England' was written in the year of the important Catholic Relief Act of 1791 which finally gave legal sanction to Catholic worship and the building of Catholic churches.¹⁶ She writes about monasteries at an interesting period: just as it was becoming acceptable for Protestants to acknowledge the injustice of Henry VIII's treatment of the monasteries, Gothic writers were finding new ways of expressing pejorative views of monasteries and convents as threats not now to society, but to the individual.¹⁷

Most monastic sites in the eighteenth century were seen by visitors; the first half of my title today, however, is 'Living in Ruins'. I now want to turn to the two novels in which Jane Austen shows characters actually living in former monasteries, *Northanger Abbey*, and *Emma* in which Mr Knightley lives in Donwell Abbey. In investigating this topic I shall be drawing on the four contexts which I have already introduced: the historical, the antiquarian, that relating to sensibility and the picturesque, and the Gothic.

Catherine Morland, the heroine of *Northanger Abbey*, dislikes reading history (NA 109). She gives as a reason its containing 'men all so good for nothing and hardly any women at all' (NA 110). There are women in Gothic novels, and they have become her substitute. She is, as a result, ignorant of 'the quarrels of popes and kings' (NA 110), which is a limitation if you go to stay in an Abbey as General Tilney invites her to do, albeit in the eighteenth century. She is too excited to listen to Eleanor Tilney's answer to her questions:

so active were her thoughts, that when [her] inquiries were answered, she was hardly more assured than before, of Northanger Abbey having been a richly-endowed convent at the time of the Reformation, [and] of its having fallen into the hands of an ancestor of the Tilneys on its dissolution, of a large portion of the ancient building still making a part of the present dwelling although the rest was decayed, or of its standing low in a valley, sheltered from the north and east by rising woods of oak. (NA 144)

General Tilney's ancestor was one of those who gained from the confiscation of monastic lands, either through favour or through purchase. In such cases a secular owner might use either the buildings themselves or the stone from them for a private house. Catherine's expectations of an abbey focus on its 'cloisters'

and its 'long, damp passages, its narrow cells and ruined chapel' (NA 143). On the journey towards Northanger Henry Tilney feeds her Gothic imagination with a humorous account of her bedroom at the Abbey, drawing on all the terrors of Ann Radcliffe's Gothic bed-chambers. As they approach the Abbey Catherine expects 'with solemn awe ... a glimpse of its massy walls of grey stone ... with the last beams of the sun playing in beautiful splendour on its high Gothic windows' (NA 164), echoing Emily's approach to the Castle of Udolpho in Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794).¹⁸ Catherine's expectations are disappointed, however, because Northanger fulfils Gilpin's prescription that an abbey should be 'hid in the sequestered vale',¹⁹ and because, as it will turn out, the house is based on a cloister.

The following morning the General offers to show Catherine the house, and then decides that because of the favourable weather she should see the grounds first. 'The Abbey would be always safe and dry', he adds (NA 181), removing any hope of 'long damp passages'. Catherine is disappointed, as she is keen to see the inside of the house, the more likely setting for the architectural Gothic. Once outside she is struck 'by the grandeur of the Abbey, as she saw it for the first time from the lawn. The whole building enclosed a large court; and two sides of the quadrangle, rich in Gothic ornaments, stood forward for admiration' (NA 182). She does admire it; less willingly she also admires the well-tended kitchen-garden which the General makes her view. Her feelings are not enlisted, however, until she sees 'a narrow winding path through a thick grove of old Scotch firs' (NA 183), which she soon discovers was the late Mrs Tilney's favourite walk. Mavis Batey quotes lines from Thomas Warton's *The Pleasures of Melancholy* (1747) in this connection:

Beneath yon' ruin'd Abbey's moss-grown piles
Oft let me sit, at twilight hour of Eve ...
Or let me tread
Its neighb'ring walk of pines, where stray'd of old
The cloyster'd brothers²⁰

The love of such an evergreen walk is an emblem of sensibility, and has the effect in the novel of linking for the first time Mrs Tilney and the young visitor to the Abbey.

Catherine Morland does creditably as a young woman of sensibility visiting an Abbey; but as an antiquary she entirely fails. As she is taken round the General's garden she fails to ask the obvious question, where are the ruins of the Abbey church? She was not prompted to ask that, even though her earlier expectation of a 'ruined chapel' had been endorsed by Henry's suggestion of 'a secret subterraneous communication between [her] apartment and the chapel of St. Anthony, scarcely two miles off' (NA 163).

This is part of the comedy of the novel: there is no point in expecting any antiquarian instincts from Catherine Morland. But what about Jane Austen? In most medieval monasteries the cloister was tucked between the nave and a transept of the Abbey church, usually, in Britain, on the south side. It is unusual,

therefore, to look at a cloister without seeing evidence of the monastery's church. It looks to me as if Jane Austen, in her play with the clichés of Gothic, did not want to create fictitious ruins of a consecrated building. Gothic takes many forms, and she does not write of the supernatural, either religious or in its Gothic inverse. Catherine Morland, like her creator, expects Gothic excess to be of purely human invention.

Jane Austen settled on the idea of a cloister, and critics have asked whether she had any source for it. First let us consider a historical source. Reading, where the cloister is a ruin, is no help. Jane Austen is always an elusive writer; but in this case the search for possible influences is made more difficult by the fact that *Northanger Abbey* is the earliest of her completed novels. Under its original title *Susan*, it was written in 1798-99 and not thought to have been substantially revised after it was first offered for publication in 1803. What we should look for is a monastic site in which the cloister had been turned into a secular house. Those who have searched for this, for example Nigel Nicolson, have lamented that Jane Austen did not visit Stoneleigh Abbey in Warwickshire until 1806.²¹ I am taken by the Duke of Wellington's modest sentence, written in 1926, 'I have an impression – though I can adduce no facts in its support – that Jane Austen when writing about Northanger, was thinking of Lacock Abbey in Wiltshire, which she may well have seen on her journeys from Hampshire to Bath.'²² Lacock was founded as an Augustinian nunnery, and you will recall that Northanger is a former convent.²³ The man who bought it at the dissolution, William Sharington, pulled down the Abbey church and made a house within the cloister. A descendant in the mid-eighteenth century restored the house in the Gothic style.²⁴ I have no more evidence than the Duke had of Jane Austen's visiting Lacock; but she did have friends, the Hicks Beaches, who were distant relations of its owner, William Davenport Talbot,²⁵ leaving open the possibility that she might have heard of it.



The cloister, Lacock Abbey

Let us leave such historical speculation and consider a literary source for Jane Austen's cloister. If we are looking for a house built round a central courtyard we might consider Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), usually regarded as the first Gothic novel. Walpole acknowledged similarity between the courtyard at Otranto and the court of Trinity College, Cambridge.²⁶ That makes one wonder if Jane remembered college quadrangles seen on her visit to Oxford in 1783,²⁷ when her brother James was a student at St John's. Walpole, in an arresting opening to his novel, uses the courtyard space at Otranto for the sudden appearance of an enormous plumed helmet.²⁸ She uses a quadrangular building in a quite different way by having her characters walk round it. Catherine Morland is shown round Northanger on the day after her arrival, being taken right round the ground floor, and round part of the upper floor. Many Gothic novels mention cloisters; but one which provides some architectural antecedents to *Northanger Abbey* is Ann Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), which, as Barbara Benedict and Deirdre Le Faye have recently pointed out, contributed several other features to the Gothic of Jane Austen's novel (NA 338-39). In *The Romance of the Forest*, which is set in seventeenth-century France, La Motte and his family, and the heroine, Adeline, take refuge in a semi-ruinous cloister attached to the equally ruinous Abbey Church of St Clair. The cloister is a mixture of old and more recent building, part of it is on two floors linked by spiral staircases, and its interior architecture consists of a confusing number of suites of deserted rooms, a feature which no doubt inspired Catherine Morland's architectural expectations of Northanger (NA 188). It is not possible to walk right round Radcliffe's cloister, however, because it is incomplete, one side being 'open to the woods'.²⁹

Radcliffe's Gothic architecture seems designed to baffle the reader, if not the heroine. Jane Austen's baffles the heroine; and this is not the place to be dogmatic about its baffling the reader. There is still an issue about the cloister at Northanger, after one has identified what can be attributed to Radcliffe. One walks round a real cloister in the arcaded walks which surround the cloister garth. The quadrangles and courts at Oxford and Cambridge derive from monastic cloisters, and it is clearly seen there that one does not walk right round the building on the inside, because movement within the building is assisted by vertical staircases, not horizontal corridors. Jane Austen has done something interesting here. Northanger Abbey does not seem to have retained the cloister walks on the ground floor, and to enable her characters to walk round the house on the ground floor she has given it Radcliffe's 'suites of apartments' (NA 188). On the upper floor she does something quite different, however, by supplying what the architectural historian Rosalys Coope calls a 'corridor-gallery', a feature which she particularly associates with the conversion of cloisters into residential houses.³⁰

Corridors in a Gothic novel are there to test the heroine. Can she withstand the confusion and fear they invite? On her first arrival at the Abbey, Catherine is tested by furniture. In the first room she is shown into 'The furniture was in all the profusion and elegance of modern taste' (NA 165). The only comfort for someone who 'cared for no furniture of a more modern date than the fifteenth

century' (NA 187) is that the Gothic form of the windows has been preserved. Catherine is bringing her Gothic expectations into a house which has been fashionably modernised, with only token acts of preservation of the original. When in her bedroom she finds pieces of furniture if not actually old, then at least old-fashioned, the first two of her painful Gothic experiences, concerning the chest and the black cabinet, take place. The third of these, however, is prompted not by furniture but by architecture.

Of the four sides of Northanger Abbey's quadrangle one is modern, having been built by the General's father (NA 189). Of the other three sides one shows more medieval evidences than the other two (NA 188). Catherine has come to suspect the General of either murdering his wife or keeping her imprisoned, and she shares the Radcliffian view that any such atrocity would naturally take place in the oldest part of the building. On two occasions Eleanor Tilney attempts to show Catherine her mother's room when a command from the General prevents it (NA 191, 197). All that Catherine can glimpse beyond the folding door is that Mrs Tilney's room is on the left, and that there appears to be a staircase near it (NA 191). We know the outcome: she makes a third attempt on her own, and Mrs Tilney's room turns out to be at the end of the modern range of the building, is comfortably furnished, and even has such modern features as sash windows (NA 199). The staircase by which Catherine had suspected Mrs Tilney of being 'conveyed in a state of well-prepared insensibility' (NA 194), in fact delivers Henry Tilney rushing up the stairs from the stable-yard (NA 199).

Catherine Morland's architectural confusion alludes to the success of other Gothic heroines in finding their way round complicated buildings. Adeline is fearless in making her way through ill-lit rooms lined with old and torn tapestries. Emily, in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, makes two unsuccessful attempts to find her aunt, who is imprisoned by her husband, Montoni, in one of the towers of Udolpho. The harrowing challenges she encounters convince her that Madame Montoni has been murdered. On her third attempt Emily finds her aunt in an emaciated state in the semi-ruinous 'east turret' of the castle.³¹ Was this in Jane Austen's mind when she made Mrs Tilney's pleasant room face west? The search for the imprisoned wife occurs in several novels of the period and shows these Gothic houses offering heroic adventure to young women in a supposedly domestic setting. Since her own mother is entirely innocent of Gothic experience, Catherine perhaps needs to discover the possible fate of wives before falling in love with the oppressor's son.

Adeline and Emily are challenged by architecture which subjects them to both physical and supernatural threats. Catherine, in a modernised house, is threatened by neither violence nor ghosts; what she has to fear is mental intimidation and social embarrassment. She does not expect the General to imprison her in the convent – a cliché which Jane Austen modernises neatly by letting him exercise his domination in turning her out.

The contrast in moving to my last abbey, Mr Knightley's house in *Emma*, is considerable. Donwell Abbey is not based on any specific monastic building; yet

its origins are confirmed by its 'low and sheltered' situation, and the presence of Abbey-Mill Farm and the 'old Abbey fish-ponds'.³² The house, which covers 'a good deal of ground', is 'rambling and irregular'. Emma reflects that 'It was just what it ought to be, and it looked what it was' (*E* 389) – not something one can say about a cloister turned into a house. Mr Knightley's business is agriculture and estate management (*E* 392) and Donwell Abbey's horticultural excellence is of long standing. It is 'famous for its strawberry-beds'; and, Miss Bates, exclaiming over a gift of apples, remarks 'My mother says the orchard was always famous in her younger days' (*E* 384, 257). These English-growing fruits contrast with the pineapples which General Tilney grows in hot-houses (*NA* 182).

My four criteria at first sight fare badly with Donwell Abbey. We are not told its history, and no-one at the strawberry-picking party, the only episode in the novel set at Donwell, shows any antiquarian interest in the site. Antiquarian interest is confined to the contents of Mr Knightley's cabinets, laid out to amuse Mr Woodhouse (*E* 393). The view from the garden looks towards the river, rather than the Abbey (*E* 391).³³ It does not evoke a now outworn sensibility, but contentment with a view that is peculiarly English (*E* 391). There are no Gothic features at Donwell; but Jane Fairfax nonetheless feels the need to escape, not because of Gothic tyranny but because she is a victim of two recognisably modern forms of suffering, a thoughtless fiancé and an unattractive job offer.

Jane Austen's major references to monasteries are at the beginning and end of her career as a writer. Her 'History of England' and the first draft of *Northanger Abbey* are products of the 1790s. *Emma* was started in 1814. The satire in her early references is replaced by the benign mood in which Donwell is described. In this shift she may be reflecting another argument in the debate over Catholic Emancipation. The Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 did not benefit the religious orders – it was concerned largely with political liberties of the lay Catholic. In the end it was determined by events in Ireland; but in the course of the debate in England Catholic historians rallied to counter long-standing Protestant prejudices, one of which was suspicion of monasteries.³⁴ Goldsmith, in 1771, although critical of Henry VIII, still dismissed the monasteries as 'seats of indolence and imposture'.³⁵ In response to this traditional Protestant view Catholic writers stressed the social usefulness of the monasteries. Rosemary O'Day cites John Milner, a Catholic priest and historian of Winchester, who wrote in 1798 of the great abbeys before their dissolution:

By their doles and alms they entirely provided for the poor, insomuch that no poor laws existed until soon after their dissolution. The monks let their farms at easy rents, and made allowances for unfavourable seasons, so that abundance and population increased around them.³⁶

This was a pertinent comment, since poor laws were an issue during the wars with France, and one which was picked up with more vehemence after Jane Austen's death by William Cobbett.

Northanger Abbey and *Emma* give contrasting views of how to live within the monastic inheritance. You could make a fashionable house out of a cloister, or you

could live as Mr Knightley does in the farming tradition of the old monasteries. Northanger Abbey shows that oppression does not need a monastery in which to flourish. Donwell shows that the benevolent side of a monastery might also survive into modern times. One of the submerged themes of *Emma* is that it quietly demonstrates how the English might live with their complex monastic inheritance.

Notes

- 1 Jane Austen, 'The History of England' in Jane Austen, *Juvenilia*, ed. Peter Sabor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 181. Jane Austen ends her 'History' with the date 'Saturday Nov. 26th 1791', p. 189.
- 2 Oliver Goldsmith, *The History of England, from The Earliest Times to the Death of George II*, 4 vols (London, 1771), vol. II, p. 418.
- 3 William Gilpin, *Observations, relative chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, Made in the Year 1772, On several Parts of England; particularly the Mountains, and Lakes of Cumberland, and Westmoreland*, 2 vols (London, 1786), vol. 2, p. 122.
- 4 Henry Austen, in his 'Biographical Notice of the Author' published in the first, posthumous, edition of *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* (1817), claimed that 'At a very early age she was enamoured of Gilpin on the Picturesque' (Jane Austen, *Persuasion*, ed. Janet Todd and Antje Blank [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006], p. 330).
- 5 Shakespeare, Sonnet 73, l. 4.
- 6 Margaret Aston, 'English Ruins and English History: The Dissolution and the Sense of the Past' in her *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion* (London: Hambledon Press, 1984), pp. 313-337 (319).
- 7 William Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye ... relative to Picturesque Beauty; made in the Summer of the Year 1770* (1782; Oxford and New York: Woodstock Books, 1991), pp. 34-36.
- 8 Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, ed. Barbara M. Benedict and Deirdre Le Faye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 43.
- 9 Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, ed. Edward Copeland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 388.
- 10 Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*, ed. John Wiltshire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 100.
- 11 Walter Scott, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), canto 6, xxviii-xxxi; canto 2, i.
- 12 Deirdre Le Faye, *Jane Austen: A Family Record* (2nd edn, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 50-52.
- 13 Cecil Slade, *The Town of Reading and its Abbey* (Reading: MRM Associates, 2001), pp. 25-27.
- 14 Oliver Goldsmith, *The History of England*, vol. II, pp. 418-19.

- 15 John McManners, *The French Revolution and the Church* (London: S.P.C.K., 1969), pp. 31-37.
- 16 Denis Gwynn, *The Struggle for Catholic Emancipation (1750-1829)* (London: Longmans, Green, 1928), pp. 56-57.
- 17 *The Gothic Revival 1720-1870: Literary Sources and Documents*, ed. with an Introduction by Michael Charlesworth, 3 vols (East Sussex: Helm Information, 2002), vol. I, p. 13.
- 18 Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, ed. Bonamy Dobrée with an Introduction and Notes by Terry Castle (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 226-27.
- 19 William Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye*, p. 31.
- 20 Thomas Warton, *The Pleasures of Melancholy. A Poem* (London, 1747), pp. 5-6, quoted in Mavis Batey, *Jane Austen and the English Landscape* (London: Barn Elms, 1996), p. 40.
- 21 Nigel Nicolson, *The World of Jane Austen* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991), pp. 141-47. The cloister became the courtyard of a post-Reformation mansion at Titchfield Abbey in Hampshire; the house was largely demolished in 1781 (Nikolaus Pevsner and David Lloyd, *Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, The Buildings of England*, [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967], p. 627).
- 22 The 7th Duke of Wellington, 'Houses in Jane Austen's novels', *Spectator*, 135 (1926), 524-25, quoted from the reprint in the *Collected Reports* vol. 1, pp. 185-88 (185).
- 23 Jane Austen's is the period in which 'convent' came to mean a religious house for women (*OED*, convent, *n.* 6). Before then it referred to monastic houses for either men or women.
- 24 For Lacock Abbey see Nikolaus Pevsner, *Wiltshire*, rev. Bridget Cherry, *The Buildings of England* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), pp. 284-89; The National Trust, *Lacock Abbey Wiltshire* (London: National Trust [Enterprises], 2003), especially pp. 38-43, and the plans of the house on the inside of the front cover and p. 28.
- 25 *A Governess in the Age of Austen: The Journals and Letters of Agnes Porter*, ed. Joanna Martin (London and Rio Grande: Hambledon Press, 1998), pp. 334, 348.
- 26 Horace Walpole, letter to Madame du Deffand, 27 January 1775, *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. W. S. Lewis, vol. VI (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 145.
- 27 Deirdre Le Faye, *Jane Austen: A Family Record*, pp. 47-48.
- 28 Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, ed. Michael Gamer (London: Penguin, 2001), p. 18.
- 29 Ann Radcliffe, *The Romance of the Forest*, ed. Chloe Chard, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 19.
- 30 Rosalys Coope, 'The "Long Gallery": Its origins, development use and decoration', *Architectural History*, 29 (1986), 43-84 (50-51).
- 31 Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, pp. 307-65.

- 32 Jane Austen, *Emma*, ed. Richard Cronin and Dorothy McMillan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 388, 392.
- 33 After the lecture Vera Quin drew my attention to the significance of the ‘low stone wall with high pillars’ which terminates the ‘short avenue of limes’ at Donwell (*E* 391), pointing out that the pillars frame a view of the Abbey-Mill Farm.
- 34 Rosemary O’Day, *The Debate on the English Reformation* (London: Methuen, 1986), pp. 55, 69-72.
- 35 Oliver Goldsmith, *The History of England*, vol. II, p. 375.
- 36 John Milner, *The History Civil and Ecclesiastical, & Survey of the Antiquities, of Winchester*, 2 vols (Winchester, 1798-1801), vol. I, p. 333.

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

Registered Charity Number 1040613

ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED

31st DECEMBER 2008

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2008

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THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

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Patrick Stokes – Chairman
David Selwyn – Vice Chairman
Maureen Stiller – Hon Secretary
Jill Williams – Hon Treasurer
Fiona Ainsworth
Tony Corley
Catharine Freeman
Clare Graham
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THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2008

The trustees present their report and the financial statements of the Society for the year ended 31st December 2008. The trustees have adopted the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP 2005) "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" in preparing the annual report and financial statements of the charity which comply with statutory requirements and the governing document

LEGAL STATUS

The Jane Austen Society is registered with the Charity Commissioners (Number 1040613) and governed by the Constitution adopted on 16th July 1994 as amended on 26th July 2003.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Trustees

The society is administered by the executive committee, which in accordance with the constitution consists of not less than 10 nor more than 17 members. The members of the committee are the officers of the charity and between 6 and 13 elected members.

The members of the executive committee during the year ended 31st December 2008 were:

Richard Knight – President
Patrick Stokes – Chairman
David Selwyn – Vice Chairman
Maureen Stiller – Hon Secretary
Jill Williams – Hon Treasurer
Fiona Ainsworth
Tony Corley
Catharine Freeman
Clare Graham
Marilyn Joice
Deirdre Le Faye
Elizabeth Proudman
Kathryn Sutherland
Janet Todd
Lesley Wilson

All members of the executive committee (including the officers) are elected by postal ballot of the members of the society for a period of five years and are then eligible for re-election. The executive committee in addition may appoint up to four co-opted members.

On appointment trustees are given information on the role of a trustee and Charity Law.

The committee met three times during the year, and in addition a joint meeting was held with representatives of the branches and groups.

A sub-committee of four members of the executive committee was formed during the year ended 31st December 2007 to deal with the processes relating to the publications of the society. This committee meets as and when required.

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2008

(continued)

Trustees' Responsibilities

Law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the charity's financial activities during the year and of its financial position at the end of the year. In preparing financial statements giving a true and fair view, the Trustees should follow best practice and;

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed, subject to any departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy the financial position of the charity and which enable them to ascertain the financial position of the charity and ensure that the financial statements comply with its constitution. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTIVES

The principal objective of the Society is as follows:

To promote the advancement of education for the public benefit of the life and works of Jane Austen and the Austen family.

This objective is primarily achieved by the production of publications relating to the life and works of Jane Austen, through education and by contributions to academic debate regarding Jane Austen, her works and family.

The Trustees have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commissioners general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the aims and objectives of the Society and in planning future activities. In particular the Trustees consider how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives that have been set.

The Society, where appropriate, may seek to preserve artefacts relating to Jane Austen, either by purchase or by contribution towards expenses. In particular the society may contribute to projects at Jane Austen's House in Chawton which is in the care of the Jane Austen Memorial Trust.

OBJECTIVES FOR THE YEAR

The Society's objectives for the year were to build on the progress made in previous years and to raise the profile of the Society by the production of new publications.

The Society also hoped to be able to increase its activities in the field of education by the granting of bursaries towards expenses incurred in the study of Jane Austen, her works, family, life and times.

REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS, ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The Society produced or reprinted one publication in the year, "My Aunt Jane Austen". The collected Reports from 2000 to 2005 (volume 6) were also published during the year. A successful weekend conference of lectures and visits was held in Lichfield in September 2008.

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2008

(continued)

As no applications were received for bursaries during the year, it was decided to widen the scope of the bursary fund to cover any educational purposes. The fund was renamed accordingly. A transfer of £4,000 was made from the education fund to the general fund towards the cost of publications produced during the year.

The financial results for the year are set out in the Statement of Financial Activities on page 6 of these financial statements.

REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS, ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS (continued)

There was an excess of income over expenditure on the general fund of £5,350 in the year (2007 – deficit of £3,575). There was a decrease in overall income of £10,257, mainly due to decreased sales of publications of £3,357, a decrease in income from events of £5,879 and decrease in the income of branches of £7,422. A refund of £6,855 has been received from HM Revenue & Customs since 31st December 2008 and is treated as a debtor in these accounts. This represents the tax recoverable on donations made under Gift Aid for the years 2002 to 2005.

FUTURE PLANS

The committee's aims in the future are to continue to promote the activities of the Society, by the production of publications, the organisation of conferences and any other activities which they consider appropriate.

RESERVES

The Society's policy regarding reserves is detailed in note 1(i) on page 9 of these accounts. The committee consider, on the basis of current information available, that these funds are adequate to meet their known future commitments.



Patrick Stokes
Chairman

Date 1st June 2009

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE COMMITTEE OF

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

I report on the accounts of the society for the year ending 31st December 2008 and the balance sheet as at that date set out on pages 6 to 12.

Respective Responsibilities of the Trustees and the Examiner

As the society's committee you:

- are responsible for the preparation of the accounts
- consider that the audit requirement of Section 43(2) of the Charities Act 1993 (the Act) does not apply

It is my responsibility to state, on the basis of the procedures specified in the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners under Section 43(7)(b) of the Act, whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of Independent Examiner's Report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the society and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as the committee concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

Independent Examiner's Statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

1. Which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with Section 41, of the Act; and
 - prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the requirements of the Act have not been met.
2. To which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Mrs C A Stephens FCA
Sheen Stickland LLP
Chartered Accountants
4 High Street
Alton
Hampshire
GU34 1BU

Date 12th June 2009

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2008

	General Fund £	Designated Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 31.12.08 £	Total Funds 31.12.07 £
INCOMING RESOURCES					
Annual subscriptions received	14,052	-	-	14,052	14,156
Life Membership fund income	-	250	-	250	750
Gift Aid tax recovered	6,855	-	-	6,855	-
Sundry donations and receipts	1,606	-	-	1,606	105
Sales of publications	4,110	-	-	4,110	7,467
Advertising and distribution	196	-	-	196	522
Income from events	20,895	-	-	20,895	26,774
Sale of Annual General Meeting Tickets	1,995	-	-	1,995	2,067
Bank interest receivable	8,857	-	-	8,857	9,810
Income of branches (note 12)	11,872	-	-	11,872	19,294
TOTAL INCOME RESOURCES	70,438	250	-	70,688	80,945
RESOURCES EXPENDED					
Charitable activities					
Purchases of publications (after stock adjustments)	5,579	-	-	5,579	6,304
Newsletter	5,200	-	-	5,200	5,113
Expenses of events	19,011	-	-	19,011	28,361
Events insurance	1,388	-	-	1,388	1,263
Annual General Meeting (note 4)	7,810	-	-	7,810	8,028
Annual Report (note 5)	7,241	-	-	7,241	6,298
Assets transferred to Hampshire Group	910	-	-	910	-
Expenses of branches (note 12)	11,326	-	-	11,326	20,758
Bursaries, grants and donations	-	-	-	-	1,277
Printing and stationery	947	-	-	947	1,015
Postage and telephone	160	-	-	160	215
Committee travelling expenses	1,699	-	-	1,699	1,474
Members database	1,694	-	-	1,694	1,868
Publicity	-	-	-	-	31
Bank charges	908	-	-	908	1,116
Storage	80	-	-	80	-
Depreciation of office equipment	46	-	-	46	63
Subscriptions	169	-	-	169	169
	64,168	-	-	64,168	83,353
GOVERNANCE COSTS					
Independent examiner's fee	920	-	-	920	823
TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED	65,088	-	-	65,088	84,176
NET INCOMING/(OUTGOING)	5,350	250	-	5,600	
Transfers between funds					
Education fund	4,000	(4,000)	-	-	-
Life membership fund	1,380	(1,380)	-	-	-
NET INCOMING/OUTGOING					
RESOURCES FOR THE YEAR	10,730	(5,130)	-	5,600	(3,231)
Balances as at 1 st January 2008	94,748	142,177	1,003	237,928	241,159
Balances as at 31 st December 2008	105,478	137,047	1,003	243,528	£237,928

All the activities of the Society are classed as continuing.

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

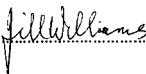
BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31st DECEMBER 2008

	2008		2007	
	£	£	£	£
FIXED ASSETS				
Tangible assets (note 6)		138		184
CURRENT ASSETS				
Stock of publications	13,576		12,588	
Debtors (note 7)	19,898		11,436	
Balances at bankers	163,757		167,044	
Balances at bankers – branches	11,385		12,309	
Fixed Rate Charity Bond	37,171		37,171	
Cash in hand	38		120	
	<u>245,825</u>		<u>240,668</u>	
CREDITORS: amounts falling due within one year (note 8)	<u>2,435</u>		<u>2,924</u>	
NET CURRENT ASSETS		<u>243,390</u>		<u>237,744</u>
NET ASSETS		<u>£243,528</u>		<u>£237,928</u>
 GENERAL FUND (note 2a)				94,748
		105,478		
DESIGNATED FUNDS (note 2b)				
Life membership fund	11,047		12,177	
Education fund	<u>126,000</u>		<u>130,000</u>	
		137,047		142,177
RESTRICTED FUNDS (note 2c)				
George Austen Gravestone Restoration Fund (note 9)	-		-	
Acquisition Fund (note 9)	1,000		1,000	
Alwyn Austen Memorial Fund (note 9)	<u>3</u>		<u>3</u>	
		<u>1,003</u>		<u>1,003</u>
		<u>£243,528</u>		<u>£237,928</u>

Approved by the Committee on 1st June 2009

.....


Chairman

.....


Treasurer

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS – 31st DECEMBER 2008

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

a) Basis of accounting

The accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention, using the accruals concept of accounting.

The accounts are prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice “Accounting by Charities 2005” and with applicable accounting standards.

b) Life Membership Fund

Life membership subscriptions are transferred to the general fund by equal instalments over a ten year period.

c) Annual Subscriptions

Annual subscriptions are treated as income of the year in which they are received.

d) Donations and Legacies

Donations and Legacies for the general activities of the society are treated as income of the general fund in the period in which they are received.

e) Tangible Fixed Assets

Individual fixed assets costing £250 or more are capitalised at cost.

Depreciation is provided at the following annual rates in order to write off the cost of each asset over its estimated useful life:

Fixtures, fittings and equipment	-	25% on net book value
Office equipment	-	25% on net book value

f) Stocks

Purchases of publications for resale are written off in equal instalments over a period of five years. Stocks therefore represent the unamortised portion of the last four years purchases.

Stocks held at branches of publications purchased direct from suppliers by those branches are not shown in the accounts.

g) Resources expended

Resources expended are included in the Statement of Financial Activities on an accruals basis inclusive of irrecoverable VAT.

Expenditure is allocated to the activity to which it relates.

h) Taxation

The society is a charity and therefore no provision has been made for Income Tax.

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS – 31st DECEMBER 2008

(continued)

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES (continued)

i) Reserves

The balance of the general fund represents approximately nineteen month's expenditure which the committee consider to be appropriate in the circumstances.

£120,000 of the legacies received in the years ended 31st December 2003 and 31st December 2004 was transferred to a designated fund. It was originally intended that the income from this fund would be used to provide travel bursaries to those wishing to carry out studies in furtherance of the charitable objects of the society. It has now been decided by the committee that this fund should be re-designated to cover a wider range of educational activities.

j) Branches

Branches of the society are defined in charity law as an integral part of the Society and as such enjoy various privileges and responsibilities in regard to the Society. In particular a branch can call upon the Society for financial support and is covered by the public liability insurance of the Society. The financial results of branches are incorporated into the Society's statement of financial activities and the assets and liabilities of branches are included in the Society's balance sheet.

A group has no connection in law with The Jane Austen Society, and the financial activities of groups are not reflected in these accounts.

Details of activities of the branches are shown in note 12 to the accounts.

The members of the Hampshire branch decided that with effect from 1st January 2008, the status of the branch would change to that of a group. The assets and liabilities of the Hampshire branch at that date were transferred to the new Hampshire group.

2. TERMINOLOGY - Definitions

Types of Fund

- a) Unrestricted Fund is a fund of which the executive committee of the Society has unrestricted authority to spend the income and the capital to further the objectives of the Jane Austen Society.
- b) Designated Funds represent unrestricted funds earmarked for particular purposes by the executive committee of the Society in the exercise of its discretionary powers.
- c) Restricted Funds are funds which are subject to a restriction as to their use.

3. STATUS

The Society is an association of its members. It is registered as a charity (number 1040613) under the provisions of the Charities Act 1993.

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS – 31st DECEMBER 2008

(continued)

4. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING EXPENSES

	2008	2007
	£	£
Hire of marquee and equipment	3,436	3,362
Hire of public address system	969	922
Teas	1,642	1,996
Hire of coaches	215	205
Toilet hire	1,047	1,016
Printing and stationery	-	53
Speakers honorarium	316	330
Sundry expenses	70	119
Flowers and gifts	115	25
	<u>£7,810</u>	<u>£8,028</u>

5. ANNUAL REPORT EXPENSES

	2008	2007
	£	£
Printing and stationery	4,401	3,751
Postage	2,840	2,547
	<u>£7,241</u>	<u>£6,298</u>

**6. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS
COST**

	Opening Balance	Additions	Disposals	Closing Balance
	£	£	£	£
Fixtures, fittings and equipment	750	-	-	750
Office equipment	<u>323</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>323</u>
	<u>£1,073</u>	<u>£ -</u>	<u>£ -</u>	<u>£1,073</u>

DEPRECIATION

	Opening Balance	Provision for year	On Disposals	Closing Balance
	£	£	£	£
Fixtures, fittings and equipment	573	44	-	617
Office equipment	<u>316</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>318</u>
	<u>£ 889</u>	<u>£ 46</u>	<u>£ -</u>	<u>£935</u>

NET BOOK VALUE

	Opening Balance	Closing Balance
	£	£
Fixtures, fittings and equipment	177	133
Office equipment	<u>7</u>	<u>5</u>
	<u>£ 184</u>	<u>£138</u>

The society was given mementoes of Jane Austen, articles of jewellery etc which are maintained on public display at Jane Austen's House, Chawton. These items are recorded in the accounts at nil cost to the society. Items of Jane Austen memorabilia purchased through the acquisition fund are charged to that fund in the year of purchase.

THE JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS – 31st DECEMBER 2008

(continued)

7. DEBTORS

	2008	2007
	£	£
Other debtors	14,989	5,722
Prepayments and accrued income	4,909	5,714
	<u>£19,898</u>	<u>£11,436</u>

8. CREDITORS

	2008	2007
	£	£
Other creditors	1,515	2,022
Accruals and deferred income	920	902
	<u>£2,435</u>	<u>£2,924</u>

9. RESTRICTED FUNDS (note 2c)

George Austen Gravestone Restoration Fund

	2008	2007
	£	£
Balance brought forward	-	186
Donation towards Elizabeth Austen Memorial Plaque	-	(186)
Balance as at 31 st December 2008	<u>£-</u>	<u>£-</u>

Acquisition Fund

	2008	2007
	£	£
Balance brought forward	1,000	1,000
Balance as at 31 st December 2008	<u>£1,000</u>	<u>£1,000</u>

Alwyn Austen Memorial Fund

	2008	2007
	£	£
Balance brought forward	3	223
Donation towards Elizabeth Austen Memorial Plaque		(220)
Balance as at 31 st December 2008	<u>£3</u>	<u>£3</u>

This fund is operated by the Kent branch of the society.

10. PAYMENTS TO MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

	2008	2007
	£	£
Reimbursed expenses and payments	<u>£1,177</u>	<u>£2,610</u>

No member of the executive committee received any remuneration from the Society.

JANE AUSTEN SOCIETY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS – 31st DECEMBER 2008

(continued)

11. ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

	Tangible Fixed Assets £	Net Current Assets £	Total £
Restricted funds	-	1,003	1,003
Designated funds	-	137,047	137,047
Unrestricted funds	138	105,340	105,478
	<u>£138</u>	<u>£243,390</u>	<u>£243,528</u>

12. BRANCHES

	Midlands £	Kent £	Northern £	Scotland £	Total £
<u>Income</u>					
Subscriptions	567	1,031	791	683	3,072
Income from events	1,189	2,032	1,779	2,290	7,290
Sales of publications	300	217	370	434	1,321
Donations	-	21	-	52	73
Interest	12	-	81	23	116
	<u>£2,068</u>	<u>£3,301</u>	<u>£3,021</u>	<u>£3,482</u>	<u>£11,872</u>

	Midlands £	Kent £	Northern £	Scotland £	Total £
<u>Expenses</u>					
Expenses of events	1,457	2,010	2,111	2,401	7,979
Costs of publications	338	789	630	144	1,901
Donations	-	20	100	123	243
Administration expenses	294	70	231	608	1,203
	<u>£2,089</u>	<u>£2,889</u>	<u>£3,072</u>	<u>£3,276</u>	<u>£11,326</u>
Branch Surplus/(Deficit)	<u>£(21)</u>	<u>£412</u>	<u>£(51)</u>	<u>£206</u>	<u>£546</u>

JANE AUSTEN'S HOUSE

JANE AUSTEN MEMORIAL TRUST
CHAWTON, ALTON, HAMPSHIRE

Telephone: (01420) 83262

*17th-century house where Jane Austen lived
from 1809 to 1817*

Set in pleasant garden, ideal for picnicking.
Refreshments are also available in the village.

The house contains items used by Jane and her family including
furniture, pictures, books, letters and documents.

Old bakehouse with family's wash tub,
bakery oven and Jane's donkey cart.

THE HOUSE IS OPEN:

1 March – 31 May daily 10.30-4.30

1 June – 31 August daily 10-5

1 September – 31 December and 1 January daily 10.30-4.30

Closed Christmas Day and Boxing Day

January and February Saturday and Sunday 10.30-4.30

Book Shop

Fanny Knight's Diaries: Jane Austen through her niece's eyes, by Deirdre Le Faye. From diaries kept by Fanny Knight from the age of 11, it is possible to gain a vivid picture of the happy life of her family in their Kentish neighbourhood, and also biographical information regarding Jane Austen which is not recorded anywhere else. Illustrated (2000).

Jane Austen's Family and Tonbridge, by Margaret Wilson

This book explores the history of Jane Austen's Kentish ancestors and cousins as well as being informative about acquaintances who also had a Tonbridge connection. Illustrated. (Published in association with the Kent Branch, 2001.)

Jane Austen and Lyme Regis, by Maggie Lane

An authoritative account of the places associated with Jane Austen's two visits to Dorset in 1803 and 1804 and the famous scenes in *Persuasion*. Includes a brief history of the resort, quotations from later writers, many illustrations and a map (2003).

The Complete Poems of James Austen, edited with an introduction and notes by David Selwyn. This volume provides for the first time an opportunity to enjoy all the poetry written by Jane Austen's eldest brother - the amusing prologues and epilogues to the Steventon theatricals, the affectionate verses for his children and the lyrical descriptions of the Hampshire landscape he loved so much (2003).

Fugitive Pieces: the Poetry of James Edward Austen-Leigh, Jane Austen's nephew and biographer, edited with an introduction and notes by David Selwyn. The poems, many of them written in his youth, are interspersed with charming silhouette pictures cut by James Edward Austen-Leigh himself (2006).

The Letters of Mrs Lefroy: Jane Austen's Beloved Friend, edited by Helen Lefroy and Gavin Turner. Written 1800-1804, these letters constitute a remarkable historical resource, combining details of domestic life and country society in North Hampshire with commentary on events on the wider national stage at a time of great anxiety in Britain. Illustrated (2007).

Jane Austen's Steventon, by Deirdre Le Faye. A short history of the parish of Steventon, where Jane Austen lived for the greater part of her life, and which has now become famous as her birthplace. Illustrated (2007).

The Society's publications

The *Collected Reports* are an important record of the Society's history since its inception, and of original research over the years. Subjects covered in the annual address at the AGM range widely and include all aspects of the life and work of Jane Austen.

Collected Reports I, 1949-1965

Collected Reports II, 1966-1975

Collected Reports III, 1976-1985

Collected Reports IV, 1986-1985

Collected Reports V, 1996-2000 (includes Index from 1949)

Collected Reports VI, 2001-2005 (includes Index 2001-2005)

My Aunt Jane Austen: a memoir, by Caroline Austen

Unique childhood memories of Mrs Austen, Jane and Cassandra at Chawton (1952, reprinted 1991).

Jane Austen in Bath, by Jean Freeman

First published in 1969, the text has been completely revised by Gavin Turner, with new illustrations (2002).

Reminiscences of Jane Austen's niece Caroline Austen, ed. Deirdre Le Faye

Caroline's own memoirs, written in the 1870s, look back to Regency Hampshire, to the Steventon district where her aunt Jane Austen had grown up, and where the neighbours mentioned in Jane's letters lived on into Caroline's girlhood. Illustrated (1986, reprinted 2004).

Jane Austen: Collected Poems and Verse of the Austen family, ed. David Selwyn

All poems known to have been written by Jane Austen are printed here, and all those by her mother, a clever and witty versifier, as well as charades, poems and riddles by other members of the family circle. Fully annotated. (Published in association with Carcanet Press, 1996.)

Godmersham Park, Kent - before, during, and since Jane Austen's day, by Nigel Nicolson.

With his discerning and knowledgeable eye the author describes this elegant country house, once the home of Jane Austen's brother Edward. He comments on references in Jane Austen's letters to her visits. Here she acquired an understanding of social life in large houses, used so effectively in her novels. Illustrated (1996.)

Jane Austen: A Celebration, ed. Maggie Lane and David Selwyn, with a foreword by HRH the Prince of Wales.

A collection of views of Jane Austen from distinguished people in all walks of life; many of the pieces have been specially written for the book. (Published in association with Chawton House Library and Carcanet Press, 2000.)

Continued on inside back cover